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Liberation from oppression in the writings of Johann Baptist Metz and Gregory Baum.

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LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHANN BAPTIST METZ AND GREGORY BAUM

by

Kevin J. Arsenault

A thesis
presented to the University of Windsor
in fulfillment of the
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in
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the poor and oppressed.

ABSTRACT

Liberation From Oppression in the Writings of
Johann Baptist Metz and Gregory Baum

by

Kevin James Arsenault

This thesis considers the thought of Johann Baptist Metz and Gregory Baum on the central theological theme of liberation from oppression. The essential aspects of this theme were uncovered and compared in order to expose the major similarities and differences that exist between them. The aim in doing so was to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a shared core of fundamental teaching in their writings on liberation from oppression?
2. Are there significant correlations within each theology between (a) the analysis of oppression, (b) the theological elaboration of a liberation process, and (c) the application of theory to practical political and pastoral strategy?
3. Are there significant differences in each theologian's understanding of a practical process of liberation? If so, can the source of these divergencies be located in differences between their respective analyses of oppression?

In order to uncover the thought of each theologian, a three-stage hermeneutical model was applied to their writings. This model was designed to expose three dimensions of their overall theological enterprise: (a) their analysis of the concrete situations and trends of oppression existing within their society, (b) their theological response to these situations and trends in terms

of a liberation process, and (c) their practical suggestions regarding the political strategies and pastoral policies required to bring about liberation from oppression.

What has emerged by way of conclusion in this study? A definite consensus does indeed exist between these two theologians. Both endorse a communitarian process of liberation characterized by a concrete identification with the poor and oppressed. Despite the existence of a consensus, however, there are also significant differences between each theologian's overall understanding of a liberation process. Baum emphasizes the need for "social action" and the transformation of oppressive social structures. Metz is primarily concerned with the formation of a more authentic "Christian identity" within the context of basic communities.

These differences, however, are not <u>fundamental</u> or incompatible, but divergencies of emphasis or focus. The same emphases ("personal" and "Church" for Metz; "institutions" and "society" for Baum) are evident on all three of the above-mentioned levels, thereby revealing a correlation between levels within each theology. Nevertheless, these divergencies could not be attributed solely to the differences in the analysis of oppression found in each writer.

The most important discovery of this research is that a fundamental consensus in theology does not imply unanimity in the formulation and application of a liberation process. The attempt to find a synthesis between Christianity (Church) and the world (society) in order to provide a theological rationale for Christian identity and praxis is still the most important task facing practical theologians. A carefully-worked out synthesis of the teachings of Metz and Baum would make a positive contribution to this endeavour. This thesis provides a solid foundation for such a project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to all those who have encouraged and worked with me during the preparation of this research. The members of my thesis committee contributed generously of their time, and gave valuable suggestions and guidance.

I especially want to thank Dr. J. Norman King, my thesis director. His patience, good humor, and tireless effort on my behalf are very much appreciated. I have great respect for Dr. King's theological expertise and I am honored to have studied under his direction.

I would also like to thank Dr. Edward J. Crowley who also served on my thesis committee. His kindness and support were felt long before the writing of this thesis. The special interest he has shown in my studies was always very encouraging.

I wish to thank Dr. Vito Signorille for participating on my thesis committee as an outside reader. His suggestions and comments were very helpful.

I also want to acknowledge the support and prudent advice so charitably offered by Dr. Joseph T. Culliton. His practical wisdom has more than once saved me from the lion's den.

For all the times I interrupted their work, and was greated with smiles, I would like to tnank Ethel and Shirley, two very helpful secretaries.

I wish to especially thank my wife, Anne, for all the love and support she has shown me throughout my studies, for the many sacrifices she patiently endured, and for encouraging me in my work. And finally to Melinda, our first child, who came into the world sometime during the formulation of chapter three. She provided a considerable amount of inspiration.

PREFACE

This preface originated as a response to a question addressed to me during the oral defense of this thesis. It was suggested that my response, expanded and written as a preface, might aid the reader in understanding the boundaries and overall intention of the present research. With this aim in mind, I would like to outline the major events and influences that together form the context out of which this research emerged.

Over the past ten years, one central theological question has determined the direction of my theological studies: "What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in today's world?"

Particular issues or problems within contemporary theology always seem to raise questions concerning the basic tension between being a Christian and being a citizen of this world. This tension is especially manifested in the dialectical relationships between faith and reason, the Church and the world and, more succinctly, between secular and Christian praxis. Without an acceptable synthesis for these tensions, there can be no clear understanding of either Christian identity or Christian praxis. To know what it means to follow Christ (Christian identity) is to know what someone formed by his vision and way of life would do (Christian praxis) in the context of our present world.

In 1976 I believed that Jesus would be a charismatic person tempered, of course, with a good grounding in Thomistic systematic theology. With this understanding I became a member of a Catholic Charismatic group and began a B.A. program in Religious Studies at the Universtiy of Prince Edward Island.

During the first three years of study I came to believe that Jesus wanted a more radical response than a two-hour prayer meeting once a week coupled with an unending series of "religious" arguments and discussions. Knowing what was true meant little if it were not put into practice. What does putting one's faith into practice entail? It seemed to me that a lifestyle based on competition and "getting ahead" was incompatible with the Gospel message of Jesus. Yet such a lifestyle also seemed unavoidable while living and participating in society. Unable to find a synthesis between being a following of Jesus and being a member of such a competitive society, my interests shifted from "knowing" the truth to "being" true. I became interested in mysticism, contemplation, and a life based on simplicity.

I had the opportunity to assist in the preparation of a manuscript for publication, which led me to temporarily set aside my University studies. For one year and a half I lived a semi-eremetical life at a Trappist monastery. The peaceful atmosphere of this monastery and the many kind, cheerful monks I met will always be special memories to me. While I was at the monastery, however, I questioned whether such a "comtemplative" lifestyle was appropriate for today's world, especially in the face of so much injustice and suffering. Unable to reconcile the desire to help build a better world with a lifestyle more or less separated from society, I decided to return to P.E.I. to complete my University degree.

In the Fall of 1982, I joined a social action group and participated in a critique of the Diocesan financial holdings and practices. I was able to combine a portion of university course work with research for this group project, resulting in a paper titled, "The Nature and Function of Money in the Writings of St. Thomas."

Although I had no trouble accepting the need for social analysis and committed action on behalf of the poor and

oppressed, it seemed that most of the people involved with social justice were quite bitter toward both the Church and society. Many would become easily irritated when important theological issues and questions arose. This somewhat "anti-intellectual" approach seemed unhealthy, given the apparent lack of a theological rationale for so many of the opinions and positions that were held. I was suspicious that a certain reductionism had taken place. Was social action for justice and peace a sufficient criterion for Chritian identity? St. Thomas and the Trappists would clearly answer "no".

I explored further the question of faith/world relations in a directed-reading course and research paper entitled, "Is a Christian Humanism Possible?" My personal conclusions were that Christian humanism was not only possible but absolutely essential. Scripture calls us to work in the context of community and to build the world in accordance with God's will. I came to see that activity in the world was neither meaningless, nor a "lower" path than contemplative or specifically "religious" vocations. Still, I could not accept the commonly-held position that social action on behalf of the poor was more or less synonymous with Christianity. Although the emphasis on "doing the truth" was an obvious correction to an unhealthy emphasis on simply "knowing the truth" or "being true," in my view, the pendulum had swung too far.

In another course (on the Church), I wrote a summary analysis of Johann-Baptist Metz's book The Emergent Church. I was impressed with his radical view of basic communities, but tended to interpret his ideas on basic communities from within a somewhat "monastic" (possibly sectarian) mindset. I had met the "later" Metz with no sense of the "political" theology upon which his whole approach was founded. I appreciated his criticism of "bourgeois" religion, but I was unable to grasp the essence of his theological response to this crisis.

One last event during my final year at U.P.E.I. served to heighten my interest in the new, and ever-more popular, socially-oriented theology. I attended a day-long series of lectures by Fr. Peter Henriot, S.J., a co-founder of the Center for Concern in Washington, D.C., and a co-author of Social Analysis: Linking faith and Justice. Throughout his talks, Fr. Henriot emphasized the new social teaching found in the 1971 World Synod of Bishops document Justice in the world. There was much debate over the word "constitutive" in the document statement:

> Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

This teaching certainly added a new perspective to the whole question of Christian praxis in today's world.

With the experiences of this final year at U.P.E.I. I decided to pursue my theological studies on a graduate level. The area of study I intended to further explore was liberation and political theology.

In the Fall semester, 1983, I took a special studies course under the direction of Dr. J. Norman King. This initial study considered a number of theologians writing out of Latin America, Europe, and North America. Prominent among these were Gustavo Gutierrez, Johann Baptist Metz, and Gregory Baum. This study of various liberation and political theologies provided me with the principles and insights for a new approach to understanding and "doing" theology. This approach was founded on the new social teaching from the 1971 Synod document quoted above, and the teaching on "option for the poor" that had emerged out of the Latin American Bishop's Conferences in Medellin, Peru, and Puebla, Mexico. I became convinced that the model of theology as a process of liberation from oppression provided an adequate framework within which to elaborate a practical, yet orthodox theology.

This thesis applies this theological model to the writings of Johann Baptist Metz and Gregory Baum in a further attempt to answer the pressing question of what being a Christian means in our 20th century world. The struggle to find a workable synthesis between theory and practice, or more succinctly, between Christian identity and Christian praxis is still, in this writer's opinion, the most pressing task facing theologians.

Aids to Reader

It is important to prepare the reader for a considerable amount of sexist terminology in many of the quotations used in this thesis. Because this research draws upon a considerable number of books and articles, I had neither the time nor the permission to undertake the editorial task of correcting such language. It must be pointed out, however, that both Metz and Baum have made a concerted effort to overcome the use of exclusive language in their recent publications. The presence of sexist language in their earlier writings should, therefore, be viewed within its proper historical context.

The layout format that has been adopted in this thesis is as follows:

1. First-level division titles will be in bold-face type, underscored, unnumbered, and centered.
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to provide the reader with a clear picture of the thought of Johann Metz and Gregory Baum on the central theological theme of liberation from oppression.

Although this research focuses on the social and political dimensions of each theologian's teaching on liberation, the personal dimensions of liberation will not be downplayed or ignored. In fact they are central. In this thesis liberation always refers to human liberation. As Metz argues so well, theology "must always be elaborated as a theology of the subject."[1]

Although a focus on the theme of liberation necessarily involves a consideration of many different aspects of theological investigation, there are two central areas of interest that will receive special attention in this research: 1) the actual content of their teaching on liberation from oppression as it emerges from a prior analysis of oppression, and 2) the relationship between the analysis of oppression, and the subsequent formulation and application of a theology of liberation to political strategy and pastoral policy.

Section one deals with the reasons for choosing the writings of Metz and Baum for this research topic and appeals to four significant points of contact which provide a good foundation for comparative analysis. The theological approach they share will be discussed in section two. Sections three and four will respectively deal with the goals of the present research and the method employed to achieve them.

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[1] Metz, Faith in History and Society, [New York: The Seabury Press, 1980], 60.

Basic Similarities Between Metz and Baum

Although Baum writes from a Canadian [North American] perspective and Metz writes from a German [European] point of view, both theologians live within surprisingly similar social contexts. Both Canada and Germany are middle-class capitalist countries with similar economic conditions, including almost identical rates of unemployment.[2] In the second place both theologians are "practical" theologians who aim at addressing actual situations of oppression in their theological approach. Thirdly, both Metz and Baum are Roman Catholic theologians and, because of their interest in practical contemporary issues, are in constant dialogue with the social teachings of the Church. Finally, Metz and Baum share a common German heritage and have been profoundly influenced by the incredible oppression of Auschwitz.[3]

These four shared characteristics provide a good foundation for comparative analysis and should be kept in mind as their respective teachings on liberation from oppression are considered. This is especially so because both Metz and Baum are well-known contemporary proponents of what has been called the Catholic left.

Theological Approach: Practical Liberation Theology

There is a prominent trend in contemporary theology frequently called "practical theology". It may be broadly defined as any theology that speaks of theology's tasks and goals in terms of liberation from oppression.[4] Practical

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[2] According to The Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd., [London, England, no.4, 1984], the unemployment rate for the Federal Republic of Germany for 1984 was 9.3 per cent. The rate of unemployment in Canada for the first quarter of 1984, as recorded in Quarterly Canadian Forecast, [Ottawa, Ontario, July, 1984], was 11.3 percent.

[3] Baum claims to have discovered the presence of ideology in theology during his Jewish studies, and the memorative character of Metz's fundamental theology at least partially resulted from his reflections on keeping the memory of Auschwitz alive. These positions will be discussed later in this thesis.

theologians consider theology to be a second act of reflection on a prior act of commitment. For this approach, theology can only be done by Christians who are actively involved with their own contemporary society. Because human life is historically situated, there is need for an ongoing dialectical process between "action" and "reflection". A theology of liberation, therefore, must emerge as an ongoing process of reflection on an already existing commitment to action. Here theology aims at discovering solutions to concrete situations of oppression, first by providing an analysis of oppression, then by formulating a practical liberating response. We can see how practical theology demands that theologians discover both what Christians are to believe, and what they are to do. This task requires dialogue with scripture and Church tradition on the one hand, and committed involvement with contemporary society on the other.[5]

Both Metz and Baum have stated their intention of giving primacy to practice in their theological method, and as a result, their writings have centered on problems associated with oppression. It is from within this framework that the thought of each theologian will be examined. The focus will be on their 1) analysis of oppression, 2) theological

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[4] The term "practical theology" has a long history of use within which its method and tasks have received various interpretations. Karl Barth, for example, defined practical theology as "theology in transition to the practical work of the community," where "the practical work of the community" was primarily understood as proclamation. Evangelical Theology: an Introduction [London, 1963] 169. Others have defined this task more broadly to enter into the present situation of the Church in order to address the concrete questions of practical ecclesiastical functions and modes of actions. This is the understanding of practical theology held by Gerhard Ebeling in his work The Study of Theology, [Phil., Penn.: Fortress Press, 1975], 119-20.

[5] See the introduction to Brian Mahan and L. Dale Richesin, The Challenge of Liberation Theology: A First World Response, [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1981], where David Tracy states that "every form of theology is, in fact, the development of some mutally critical correlations between an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary situation."

formulation of a liberation process, and 3) practical strategies and solutions.

Purpose of Research

This thesis, which falls within the context of contemporary issues in theology, has a two-fold purpose.

The first and principal purpose concerns "liberation" from present-day oppressive situations and trends as this theme is treated in the works of Metz and Baum. By carefully examining and comparing their teachings it should be possible to discover the major areas of agreement in their theology. Highlighting these similarities will help to clarify the practical issues facing present-day Christians and Church officials.

To find means to achieve liberation in the lives of human beings must always be the primary goal of theologians. A practical orientation to liberation, therefore, means a special interest in exploring practical steps towards greater personal and social liberation. Is there a common core of teaching to be found in Metz and Baum in their analysis of what is oppressing contemporary human beings? Is there a fundamental consensus concerning a theological rationale for a liberation process? If so, does this consensus lead to similar suggestions for a concrete process of liberation? This thesis will attempt to answer these questions.

The second purpose concerns the role that analysis plays in the formulation of theology and its practical application to strategies for liberation. The hypothesis being tested can best be presented as a number of interrelated questions: Is there a significant correlation among the three levels of their theological task: 1) the analysis of oppression, 2) formulation of a liberation theology, and 3) practical strategies for liberation within each theology? Are there basic differences that exist in this area between Metz and

Baum? If the answer to both of these questions is "yes," can the source of divergencies between Metz and Baum be found in the analysis upon which each theology of liberation is based? Here the concern is with a central methodological problem facing contemporary theology which concerns the basic tension between the individual theologian and the social context from which he/she first interprets situations of oppression, and articulates a theological response in terms of liberation. The reasons why this is an important area for consideration will now be briefly discussed.

Despite the fact that practical theology is necessarily rooted in some form of social analysis, little attention has been given to the role that such an analysis has in shaping or influencing the method and content of theological investigation. Robin Gill, for example, claims that

> the social structure of theology, or rather the interactions that may occur between theology and society, have seldom been subjected to rigorous analysis.[6]

In an earlier work, The Social Context of Theology, Gill attempted to show that a tendency exists on the part of theologians either to ignore the sociology of religion altogether, even while describing contemporary society, or else to use sociological findings selectively to depict their social context.[7]

The suggestion that theologians use the "data", or "findings from analysis" selectively raises a serious question concerning the function that analysis of one's social context plays in the formulation and application of theology. This thesis will attempt to clarify the relation between the three levels of the theological task outlined above, with a special interest in the relation between the analysis of oppression and practical strategies for liberation.

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[6] Robin Gill, Theology and Social Structures, [London: Mowbrays, 1977], ix.

[7] Robin Gill, The Social Context of Theology, [London: Mowbrays, 1975].

Method of this Research

This research recognizes that liberation from oppression can be understood correctly only as a dialectical process involving interchanges between the personal and social dimensions of human life. With this in mind, care is taken to eliminate false dichotomies or dualisms from the respective presentations of each theologian's teaching on liberation. The various dimensions of this dialectical process will always be considered as they relate to each other as well as to the central theme of liberation.

The methodological approach of this research entails two stages: 1) analysing and exposing certain areas and aspects of of the theology of Metz [Chapter 2], and Baum [Chapter 3]; and 2) comparing the major similarities and differences that may exist in the positions of these two theologians [chapter 4]. We will then present the results of this research and a brief critical assessment of each theologian's liberation process [chapter 5].

The method for abstracting data from the writings of each theologian is, of course, selective in nature, but has been designed to provide sufficient information to test the above-stated hypotheses. The model used to interpret each theology involves three levels or stages which together comprise the essential nature of the overall theological enterprise:

1. Analysis of oppression [understanding the problem].
2. Formulation of a liberation theology [theological response to the problem].
3. Application of theology to political and pastoral strategy [resolution of the problem itself].

The first level focuses on the analysis of oppression presented in the writings of each theologian. Because every analysis is based on a definable frame of reference, the findings that result from analysis are predetermined by at least three things: 1) analytical method, 2) the

perspective from which the analysis is undertaken, and 3) the subjective selection process (emphasis, focus, bias). These dimensions of Metz's and Baum's analysis of oppression will be considered before dealing with their theology of liberation.

The second level presents the formulation of a theological response to the situations of oppression uncovered in each theologian's analysis of oppression. Since we are here referring to a theological response, redemption plays a central role in this process. The theme of liberation must be interpreted from within the context of the memories and beliefs of Christianity. A Christian process of liberation, although involving social and political dimensions, must also include a treatment of fundamental religious themes. The essential themes that will be dealt with in this research are 1) grace, 2) conversion, and 3) Christology.

These themes are themselves grounded in a fundamental theology which acts as an "ideal" model or vision of what the Church could and should become. In this way this basic vision of the Christian life is aimed towards the future and leads to the formulation of a practical eschatology. This eschatology leads in turn to the formulation of a practical theory for subsequent application. This concern with the possibilities for the present and future in terms of actual policies and strategies for liberation constitutes the third and final level of this model.

The actual theology of each writer will now be considered, beginning with the writings of Metz.

CHAPTER 2: LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHANN BAPTIST METZ

Johann Baptist Metz is a Professor of Fundamental Theology at the University of Munster in Germany. Metz is probably best known for his so-called "political theology", with its emphasis on the critique of privatization and individualism.[8] The impact of Metz's early political theology is still felt as theologians and critics continue to speak of political theology within the categories and concepts put forth by Metz in the late 60's and early 70's.

What must be borne in mind, however, is that this widely known theology is <u>not</u> the most recent stage in the development of Metz's theology, nor is it the theology upon which his present understanding of oppression and liberation is based.

Although our interest is primarily with Metz's present teaching on liberation from oppression, it is impossible to arrive at a proper evaluation of his most recent theology without first considering the various stages in the development of his theological method and thought. We will now examine these stages.[9]

<u>STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF METZ'S THEOLOGY</u>

Before dealing with the development of Metz's theological method, we shall state a few preliminary observations concerning the character of his overall theological approach.

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[8] For a clarification of the term "political theology" see Francis S. Fiorenza, "Political Theology as Foundational Theology," <u>CTSA Proceedings</u>, [vol.31, 1976], 142-177.

[9] For a graphic presentation of the major shifts and stages see Appendix A.

Like other fundamental theologians Metz is interested in dealing with the most important questions facing our present-day Church. He defines fundamental theology as an apologetical approach that forms the basis of all genuine theology: "It is an attempt to justify or defend Christian hope."[10] He believes that this endeavor must "explicate the faith in a manner corresponding to the present historical modes of human understanding,"[11] so as to "give an account of the authenticity of religion, in opposition to those systems that claim to be meta-theories of theology."[12] For Metz, this is the essential task of fundamental theology.

The word "meta-theories" is important in order to grasp the principal focus of his overall analysis of oppression. Metz uses this term with reference to a secondary or "meta-world", that consists of systems, theories or overall world-views through which the world itself is experienced and interpreted. Metz is here aware of the dialectical relationship between the beliefs and teachings of the Church and the values and ideals of other systems of thought. He recognizes that before an account of the authenticity of Christianity can be given, the present historical modes of human understanding must be identified and analyzed, and the "meta-theories" of theology which reflect the dominant symbols and ideas of modern consciousness must be evaluated and criticized.

These "fundamental" concerns immediately provide a basic perspective for interpreting Metz's theology. As the dimensions and stages in his theological and analytical methods are presented this fundamental task should be kept in mind: to defend Christian hope by demonstrating the meaning and relevance of faith in the modern world.

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[10] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 14.

[11] Metz, Theology of the World, [New York: Herder and Herder, 1971], 81-82.

[12] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 7.

The following four stages in the development of Metz's theology will now be outlined and discussed:

1. The move from a transcendental to an anthropological horizon.
2. The development of his theology of the world, based on his thesis of secularization.
3. His early political theology: critical theology.
4. His later political theology: practical fundamental theology.

Since this thesis is primarily concerned with Metz's present-day theology the first two stages will be treated in the manner of a historical survey and will draw from the views of Metz's early critics and students. In this way additional space will be reserved for a more detailed treatment of his later theological methodology.

Stage I: Shift to an Anthropological Horizon

Metz began his philosophical and theological studies at the University of Innsbruck where he met various thinkers who were confronting traditional scholasticism with a transcendental-existential philosophy. Under the direction of Eric Coreth he wrote his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on Martin Heidegger. According to a former student and long-time associate of Metz, Francis P. Fiorenza, Metz's understanding of the task of philosophy differed greatly from that of either Hegel or Heidegger.

> He does not conceive this task in relation to the past, even to origins, but in terms of an existential relation to the future.[13]

Unlike Heidegger, who radically criticized the whole metaphysical tradition or western thought, seeking a "pre-metaphysics" through a study of the pre-Socratics, Metz believed that "philosophy should...be neither metaphysical nor pre-metaphysical but post-metaphysical."[14]

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[13] Fiorenza, Francis P. "The Thought of J. B. Metz," Philosophy Today, [vol. 10, 1966], 248. This orientation towards the future continues to characterize Metz's theology.

[14] Fiorenza, "The Thought of J. B. Metz," 249.

His admiration for Karl Rahner's "transcendental-existentialism", eventually led him to write a doctoral dissertation under his direction. This work was later published in 1962 under the title Christliche Anthropozentrik.

In this study, Metz "attempts to find in Thomistic anthropocentricity both a source for the development of the modern secular world and a key to interpret it."[15] We can see from the words "source for" and "key to interpret," that Metz's interest with Thomas was primarily hermeneutical. Although Metz is concerned with showing that Thomas's theology is based on an anthropological rather than a transcendental horizon at this time, his own methodology was still employing the use of neo-scholastic metaphysical and transcendental categories:

> The approach to Thomas Aquinas, methods and questions, is that of transcendental philosophy,...evident in the concern for the formal structure of Thomas' thought and in [a] concern for the transcendental conditions of the origin and possibility of his thought.[16]

Metz's discovery of an anthropological horizon (his new hermeneutical principle) led him to criticize, then eventually depart from, the transcendental horizon of Rahner's existentialism. Gradually he came to understand transcendence in terms of historical categories rather than transcendental categories of "other-worldliness".

Metz's early work (his two dissertations) may be understood as a critique of the materialism present in Heideggerian ontology and a critique of the spiritualism found in transcendental theology. As R.D. Johns points out:

> Out of a critical stance with regard to the metaphysical and ontological bases of these positions emerges his theology of the world and his political theology."[17]

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[15] Johns, Man in the World: The Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz, American Academy of Religion: Dissertation Series, no. 16. [Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976], 72.

[16] Fiorenza, Francis P. "The Thought of J. B. Metz," 248.

[17] Johns, Man in the World, 77. For a detailed summary and critique of this phase in the development of Metz's

Although there was no explicit analysis of oppression in Metz's early philosophical and theological writings, the general direction of his theology was nonetheless based on a definite critique of the oppressive trends he detected in the philophical and theclogical systems present within theology and Church teaching. The central problem Metz sought to overcome concerned the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Metz was primarily interested in solving certain philosphical and hermeneutical problems associated with the tension between the multi-faceted phenomenon of secularity and the Christian vision and way of life. In one sense this endeavor was characterized by a process of liberation: his theclogy emerged as a response to a definite analysis of false consciousness.

Metz aimed to work out a system that would clarify the various dialectics between Christianity and contemporary systems and dominant currents of thought. Overall world-views, encompassing a philosophy of history, an epistomology, an anthropology, etc., tended to be elaborated using symbols and concepts that communicated a divided or "dualistic" view of reality. The most significant examples of this view were the dualisms of body/soul, heaven/earth, history/eternity, but most fundamentally, matter/spirit.

This analysis of oppression within contemporary philosophy, theology and mcdern consciousness, was not a prominent feature of his theology at this early stage, but it was this basic analysis that inspired Metz to develop fundamental principles and concepts for a new theological approach that addressed the basic question of how to synthesize Christian "theory" with Christian "practice" within the context of our modern secularized world.

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thought see R. D. Johns, Man in the World, 77-107; and Francis P. Fiorenza "The Thought of J.B. Metz", Philosophy Today, 247-252.

Stage II: Theology of the World

Metz's theology of the world[18] was essentially an attempt to apply the understanding of anthropocentricity he discovered in St. Thomas to the actual context of the modern secularized[19] world. Most of what we find in his theology of the world was already present in his dissertation under Rahner, but now Metz shifts from an exercise in formulating and synthesizing his ideas to the task of applying his theories to the modern world situation.

By emphasizing the biblical insight of "world as history", Metz proceeded to formulate a theology capable of confronting the various dichotomies in transcendental and/or existential theological systems. He believed that an understanding of faith as "salvation history" would overcome the body/soul, personal/social dualisms. With this view of the world as "history", Metz developed a theological anthropology which focused on the reality of human freedom in the world.

In an attempt to offset an unhealthy dis-unity, Metz emphasized the belief that human beings are a unity of body and soul[20] and are social by nature. The world provides the

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[18] Wherever "theology of the world" appears in this thesis, without capitalization and underscore, it refers to an early stage in the development of Metz's theology rather than his book by the same title. See Appendix A.

[19] Metz tells us that there are different forms of theological theories of secularization. He mentions two opposing interpretations: one which grew out of the tradition of the liberal theology of the nineteenth century which essentially equated secularization with Christianization, and one which sees Christianity not as a victim or as an opponent, but rather as the originator of the process of secularization. Whereas the first understanding can be seen as a reductionism or "falling away" from Christianity, the second position interprets secularization as either the effect or else the fulfillment of Christianity. Metz uses the term "secularization" in both of these senses, but when the interpretation is favorable, he is using it to refer to secularization defined as the effect or fulfilment of Christianity. See Faith in History and Society, 25-26, 157.

[20] Unfortunately, in his theology of the world Metz did not extend his ideas on the unity of the human person to include the "sensuous" and "political" dimensions of grace. This only comes with his later political theology. In his theology of the world, grace was still interpreted

milieu where humans can act creatively and transform both the world and themselves. For Metz, both being and history are mutually involved in the process of becoming. The hope of ultimate fufillment (both anthropological and historical) is grounded in the biblical faith that God will fulfill his promises.

Metz essentially interpreted the world from the anthropological horizon he discovered in St. Thomas. This new horizon was the foundation for his thesis on secularization. What his "thesis on secularization" effectively involved was a shift in theological emphasis from a divinized to a secular perspective from which to interpret and understand the world:

> The historical situation with which faith is faced today, and in which it must prove itself as hope, is that of the transition from a divinized to a hominized world.[21]

With this new perspective the world loses its mysterious and numinous aura and becomes more and more a purely natural or "secular" world.

From this "anthropological" starting point, Metz developed a Christology that interpreted secularization within the context of the Christ-event:

> In his Son, Jesus Christ, God accepted the world with eschatological definitiveness.[22]

Metz characterized secularization as a "Christian" phenomenon:

> The secularity of the world, as it has emerged in the modern process of secularization and as we see it today in a globally heightened form, has fundamentally, though not in its individual historical forms, arisen not against Christianity, but through it.[23]

By accepting the world as "world", Jesus thereby liberated it to be world in a radically secular form.[24] The secularity

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using existential categories and concepts.

[21] Metz, Theology of the World, 57.

[22] Metz, Theology of the World, 21.

[23] Metz, Theology of the World, 19-20.

[24] Metz, Theology of the World, 47.

of the world, "as it emerged in the modern process of secularization" is essentially a Christian event for Metz, and "testifies in our world situation to the power of the 'hour of Christ' at work within history."[25] As Metz puts it,

> with the Father's acceptance of the world in Jesus Christ we have the radical and original setting-free of the world, its own authentic being, its own clear, non-divine reality.[26]

He goes on to say that

> the world is now universally given over to what the incarnation bestows upon it in a supreme way: secularity.[27]

It is clear that Metz's whole theory of secularization is based on a favorable interpretation of the modern age. What this modern history of freedom brought about (secularization), is seen as an expression in history of what Christ made possible for the world. This understanding of how secularization is essentially a Christological event leads Metz to affirm that "there is a genuine Christian 'home' in the world, and the Christian has no reason to involve himself with it only with a bad conscience."[28] Consequently, the task for Christians is to "humanize" the world, or in other words, to set it free to be world:

> Our life of faith has to become such that it accepts (in imitation of Christ's descent) the world which it has not permeated, out of which it already lives--and so releases it precisely out of its faith, and lets it be, as world.[29]

This task of humanization must be accepted by present-day Christians as a challenge to faith:

> The hominization of the world must not be left to the ideologies, it must be taken hold of in hope as a burden and a task.[30]

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[25] Metz, Theology of the World, 19-20.

[26] Metz, Theology of the World, 35.

[27] Metz, Theology of the World, 35.

[28] Metz, Theology of the World, 44.

[29] Metz, Theology of the World, 43. We should here take note that Metz is linking the process of hominization to the praxis of imitating Christ. We shall discuss how the character of this "imitation" evolved in Metz's theology in a later section of this chapter.

[30] Metz, Theology of the World, 76.

Here faith is not to be misinterpreted as "faith in humanity", or "faith in the future", but faith in God:

> Where there is no faith in a transcendental creator, there is no genuine secularization of the world and no genuine availability of this world to men.[31]

Although in Metz's theology of the world there is a definite interest in Christian activity in society, the shape of this involvement remains abstract. Little attention is given to the problem of relating theory to practice since he is not addressing actual situations of oppression as the context for Christian social action. However, Metz was soon to take a more practical approach to translating his ideas from general theory to practical application.

STAGE III: Early Political Theology

In his work Time Invades the Cathedral, Walter Capps draws attention to a shift from a theoretical to a critical mode in Metz's theological method.[32] This transition resulted from a move from St. Thomas's anthropocentric horizon to Kant's critical method.[33] This shift illustrates the essential distinction between Metz's theology of the world and his early political theology.

The starting point for Metz's early political or "critical" theology can be found in his interpretation of Kant's definition of enlightenment:

> According to Kant, a man is enlightened only when he has the freedom to make public use of his reason in all affairs. Hence the realization of this enlightenment is never a merely theoretical problem, but essentially a political one, a problem of societal conduct. In other words, it is linked with such socio-political suppositions as render enlightenment possible.[34]

According to Johns,

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[31] Metz, Theology of the World, 65.

[32] Capps, Walter H. Time Invades the Cathedral, [Phil.: Fortress Press, 1972], 69.

[33] Johns, Man in the World, 87.

[34] Metz, Theology of the World, 112.

> the two most important aspects of the Kantian critical method for Metz are the attempt to unify theory and practice and the notion of Enlightenment as emancipation.[35]

Although Metz believed that contemporary theology has debated the transcendental philosophy of Kant, German Idealism and its successors in personalism and existentialism, he felt that

> the tradition of the Hegelian Left with its characteristic sketch plans of the philosophy of history was more or less lost sight of.[36]

Metz's early political theology sought to confront critically this philosophical tradition.

In an effort to address the issue of the proper conduct Christians should have in the world, Metz attempted to provide a more practical answer to this dialectic, but again, the task was primarily hermeneutical:

> The basic "hermeneutic problem" of theology is not primarily the relation between dogma and history. It is rather the problem of the understanding of faith and society-directed practice.[37]

> It [political theology] attempts to overcome...the stubborn opposition between private spiritual life and social freedom.[38]

It does this through

> a new notion of the relation between theory and practice according to which all theology must be orientated to action.[39]

In order to resolve this problem of relating theory to practice, Metz believed that theologians must uncover the socio-political implications of theological ideas and notions.[40] Metz himself took up this task.

By exposing and criticizing what he considered to be various ideological distortions in theology Metz was able to formulate a number of "tasks" for contemporary theologians.

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[35] Johns, Man in the World, 167.

[36] Metz, "Political Theology," 36.

[37] Metz, "Political Theology," 35-36.

[38] Metz, "Political Theology," 35.

[39] Metz, "Political Theology," 35.

[40] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 108.

For every critical discovery came a corresponding task, either "critical" or "formative", depending on the nature of the first critical findings.

He understood Critical tasks to be ongoing critiques that aim at exposing ideological traits in practical systems of belief, including those of theology and Church teaching. Such critiques serve to raise moral and political awareness and thereby bring a heightened sense of responsibility.

Metz also understood "political theology to be a positive attempt to formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of our present society."[41] He further defined it as the need "to determine anew the relation between religion and society, between the Church and societal publicness, between eschatological faith and societal life."[42] Here Metz is referring to the formative tasks of political theology: tasks that attempt to formulate theological answers to contemporary problems or deficiencies in theology.

Metz refers to these two types of tasks [critical (negative) and formative (positive)] as critical and post-critical, where every attempt to develop a formative theology must be understood as "second reflection." Metz calls "pre-critical" all thought which does not face up to the critical challenge of the Enlightenment. By "post-critical" he means thought which gives serious attention to the Enlightenment critique of reason. The dialectic between the critique of theology and society, and the post-critical, or second act of formative Christian reflection is what Metz defined as the method of his early "political" theology.[43]

An example of these "critique-task" pairs should clarify the character of the methodology of Metz's early political theology. From a critical analysis of modern Christian consciousness, with the resulting discovery of a highly

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[41] Metz, Theology of the World, 107.

[42] Metz, Theology of the World, 111.

[43] Metz, Theology of the World, 111.

privatized religious awareness, came the task of

> criticizing the strange historical and social lack of political consciousness that characterizes Christianity in general and Christian theology in particular.[44]

Here we see a slight shift in emphasis from his earlier theology of the world. Whereas his theology of the world attempted to formulate the fundamental relevance of the Church in the modern, secular world, his early political theology focused more directly on exposing the presumed political innocence of theology and Church teaching. For his early political theology Metz held that

> the deprivatization of theology is the primary critical task of political theology.[45]

Note that Metz says "critical" task, for at this stage he is more concerned with exposing error than developing a formative theology that would provide the necessary "praxis" for a new understanding of Christian involvement with the world.

Political theology launches its critique against ideology and/or injustice through the free use of critical reason. The content and character of this critique is the eschatological message of Jesus. To provide a negative critique of society by relating the eschatological message of Jesus to the modern world context constitutes the essential character and purpose of Metz's early political theology.

It is interesting to note that Metz believed the exercise of conveying the eschatological message as critique was a sign and measure of liberation:

> Its critically negative function--negativity <u>which is liberation</u>--is commonly overlooked.[46]

Here Metz understood liberation primarily in terms of "enlightenment", or "emancipatory reason."[47] Metz defined

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[44] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, ix.

[45] Metz, <u>Theology of the World</u>, 110.

[46] Metz, "Political Theology," 37.

[47] I agree with Johns when he states that "for Metz

the meaning of the term "emancipation" as

> a massive formulation of today's whole experience of the world. It is a universal category drawn from the philosophy of history to characterize the processes of liberation and enlightenment in whose terms alone the modern world can understand the Christian message.[48]

He goes on to say that the term refers to "the rebellious and informed striving of groups and classes to liberate themselves."[49]

Care must be taken not to read too much into Metz's use of the words "social" or "practice" at this stage in his theological development. Metz is essentially engaged in an abstract theoretical and philosophical project where the attempt is being made to unify practice and theory, faith and the world, within a single philosophical and theological system.[50]

Metz has shown a definite move towards a more practical understanding of the Christian faith from his theology of the world to his early political theology. Although this political theology is still theoretical in character, an obvious shift in the analytical framework of his theory has taken place. The dialectical relationship between theory and practice is now an established dimension of Metz's theology. Because this dialectic lacks a clearly definable social context, however, the endeavor remains more or less abstract: it is still a hermeneutical problem. Nevertheless, Metz was becoming increasingly aware of the need for a theological "praxis" to address the concrete social and political existence of Christians in the world.

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enlightenment is virtually synonymous with emancipation." Man in the World, 169. Metz generally uses both these terms in the sense of liberation, especially the liberation of the mind from ignorance or false consciousness.

[48] Metz, "Emancipation by Universal Suffering," Theology Digest, [vol. 21, 1973], 243.

[49] Metz, "Emancipation by Universal Suffering," 243.

[50] We will demonstrate this point more effectively in the final section of this chapter when Metz's early teaching on eschatology and political/pastoral strategy is discussed.

STAGE IV: Later Political Theology

In his work Faith in History and Society, Metz develops and builds on his earlier considerations of political theology, especially with respect to the formative tasks of theology. He does so by elaborating a practical or "praxis-orientated" fundamental theology. This is the new character of his political theology.[51] He now states that

> political theology does not aim to be a regional task of contemporary theology as a whole, but a fundamental task...it tries to carry out the same task that Christian theology has always carried out--that of speaking about God by making the connection between the Christian message and the modern world visible and expressing the Christian tradition in the world as a dangerous memory.[52]

Here we can see that Metz is interested in formulating a fundamental theology of the practical or concrete situations facing the Church and Church members. He states that

> the starting point for this practical fundamental theology is that all attempts made to base theology on pure theory or absolute reflection must be regarded as uncritical or only apparently theoretical.[53]

This theology, in its methodological approach, is "directly opposed to a non-dialectical subordination of praxis to theory" and consequently "is a theology that operates subject to the primacy of praxis."[54] According to Metz, "practical fundamental theology is based on the practical structure underlying the logos of Christian theo-logy."[55]

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[51] For a clearer understanding of the chronology of Metz's theological development it should be pointed out that Metz himself tells us that "the first stage in the development of a political theology came to an end...with the publication of the article on political theology in Sacramentum Mundi." [vol.5, London: Burns & Oates, 1970] 34-38.

[52] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 89. Emphasis mine.

[53] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 51. This increased emphasis on the primacy of practice in his theological method resulted from a favorable acceptance of criticism on Metz's part. He tells us that "shortly after the first phase in the development of a political theology, I became aware, through the work of some of my pupils, of the practical limitations of a purely theoretical critical theology." Faith in History and Society, n.3, 79.

[54] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 50.

[55] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 51.

Political theology as a practical fundamental theology functions as a theology subject to the primacy of practice. The structure of this practice has both moral and political dimensions:

> the forms of behaviour such as metanoia, exodus, and the imitation of Christ which are constitutive in my idea of God and Christological and eschatological knowledge in general have a social and political structure.[56]

Since praxis forms the foundation of practical fundamental theology it is necessary for such a theology to be the expression of this praxis:

> The fundamental theology that I have in mind will always be closely linked to a praxis that is opposed to any attempt to condition religion socially or to reconstruct it theoretically. It is, in other words, linked to the praxis of faith in its mystical and its political dimension.[57]

This methodology is an extension of Metz's belief that fundamental theology must act apologetically in a dialogical relationship with modern society and modern consciousness. In order for theology to qualify as a practical fundamental theology it must be based on the practical structure of theology as it finds expression in the praxis of faith experienced by Christians. For this reason Metz affirms that practical fundamental theology must be elaborated as a theology of the human subject:

> If political theology as a practical fundamental theology is to avoid the danger of divorcing its praxis from the subject, it must be elaborated as a theology of the subject.[58]

Metz wants to make his intention clear with respect to his understanding of political theology as a practical fundamental theology. By insisting on the essential importance of

> the concrete historical and social situation in which subjects are placed, with their experiences, sufferings, struggles and contradictions,[59]

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[56] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 54.

[57] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 10, 77.

[58] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 60.

[59] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 3.

he confirms and reaffirms his intention of giving primacy to practice in his theological method.[60]

Even the earlier role of political theology as critique takes on a much more positive character. As Metz points out:

> the critical interest of this theology...should not lead to direct criticism of the symbolic world of the people. It ought, on the contrary, to lead to making the people more and more the subject of their own symbolic world.[61]

In Metz's most recent reflections on his own theology he tells us that he is now more interested in a critique that will not only criticize what he refers to as "pure" Christianity,[62] but will also reveal the practical demands presently facing Christians:

> My new political theology...is predetermined by a need to expose "pure" Christianity for what it really is--an attempt to protect Christian teaching from the practical demands made by radical Christianity.[63]

In order to accomplish this critical task it is obvious that Metz will have to be aware of what these practical demands are. This is a new onus Metz has placed on his theology.

It is not surprising to find that Metz has focused on these practical demands in his later political theology. The chief reason for this can be found in the analysis adopted by Metz after his first considerations of political theology, and the obvious need for a more tangible context for addressing the problem of relating theory to practice. Let us now consider the overall character and method of Metz's analysis.

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60 In chapter 5, we will take a hard critical look at whether Metz's theology itself qualifies as a practical fundamental theology, or whether it is simply an abstract theory of what a practical fundamental theology should be.

61 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 150. Emphasis mine.

62 Metz refers to the religion of the middle-class, or bourgeoisie as "pure" Christianity. His analysis and interpretation of bourgeois religion will be provided in a subsequent section.

63 Metz, Faith in History and Society, ix.

Method for the Analysis of Oppression

If, as Metz believes, theology must "make the connection between the Christian message and the modern world visible,"[64] and "formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of our present society,"[65] then he must also believe that theologians must somehow discover what the conditions of our present society are: social analysis must precede theological reflection. To arrive at an analysis of oppression theologians must either borrow from the analytical findings of others or provide an analysis for themselves. Metz seems to have opted for the latter of these two alternatives:

> If we are concerned, then, with the human situation, we have first to analyze this situation, since we cannot expect an analysis to be provided in advance either by theology or by any standardized philosophy.[66]

Metz apparently has the same amount of faith in the social sciences as tools for theological investigation as he has in most contemporary branches of philosophy and theology. In his own words:

> To change theology into sociology is to assume that the experiences of the people themselves and not simply data about attitude are expressed in sociology. It is therefore hardly surprising, if this is borne in mind, that more can be learned about sociological theories (originally formulated by others) than about the history of the life and suffering of the people in many branches of modern progressive and critical theology.[67]

When Metz tells us that theologians must

> try to see their theology within the context of world-wide processes and to take seriously the fact that it is conditioned by its situation within the particular context of middle-class Central European society,[68]

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[64] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 89.

[65] Metz, Theology of the World, 107.

[66] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 3.

[67] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 149.

[68] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 4.

then one would expect him to employ a set of methodological tools capable of accomplishing such a task. What we find, however, is that at no time does Metz endorse a particular sociological method for uncovering either the institutional or symbolic structures of oppression. Metz has been seriously critized for this deficiency in concrete social analysis.[69] Metz's analysis of oppression is not based on sociological method, but on an historical analysis of the dominant theological and philosophical currents present in the tradition of Western philosophy since the beginning of the modern age.

Metz's interest in analysis is primarily in obtaining a correct interpretation of modern belief systems, or as he puts it, "meta-theories". He tells us that his aim is

> to locate the crisis in that very area where Christians in this country [Germany] find their identity: in the relatively large degree of harmony between the practice of religion and the experience of life within society."[70]

Metz is keeping a clear distinction between religion (Church) and secular life (society) within his analysis.

Because Metz is engaged in historical analysis, that is, the interpretation of historical texts, he makes it clear that an analysis of the immediate present is not possible:

> The analysis of a historical situation never discribes the present; it describes at best only the immediate past.[71]

He further adds that "this way of ascertaining a situation remains, of course, always controversial: it is necessarily hypothetical in scope."[72]

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[69] Henri de Lavalette addresses this issue with the words, "his failure to give a concrete analysis of the economic, social and political factors makes his thesis on the rise of modern subjectivity and freedom arbitrary. History here becomes the clothing of 'a priori' theory or, in other words, a scarcely camouflaged ideology." Found in Charles Davis, Theology and Political Society, [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 49. Others (Xhaufflaire, Johns, Bauer) accuse Metz of proceeding "theoretically," and of misconceiving the theory/praxis relationship.

[70] Metz, The Emergent Church, 1.

[71] Metz, The Emergent Church, 68.

What we find in Metz's writings is a significant shift in his historical analysis from his earlier to his later theology which greatly affected his overall analysis of oppression. This shift will now be considered within the framework of two different historical interpretations of the modern age. The first was "positive" and corresponded with the first three stages of the theological development outlined above. The second interpretation was "negative" and corresponded to his most recent theology, beginning with his work Faith in History and Society.

Interpretations of the Modern History of Freedom

In this section we are interested in showing how Metz first appropriated a number of positive aspects of his historical analysis of the modern age in his theology of the world and early political theology, then later based his theology on a critique of certain negative trends he detected in the same historical periods.

With this shift in historical focus came a gradual modification in the way Metz interpreted the phenomenon of secularization, which, in turn, resulted in a decisive shift in his understanding of oppression. Before discussing the effect of this shift on his analysis of oppression it is first necessary to explain what this shift entailed. A good place to begin is with the following quotation from Charles Davis who points to three stages in what he calls Metz's theory of modernity:

> First came the book Christliche Anthropozentrik representing a general acceptance of modernity. Then in the second place appeared the essays collected in the first half of Theology of the World, which put forward an abstract thesis on secularization. Finally political theology has related the Christian faith to social praxis and the modern history of freedom.[73]

There is yet another stage in the development of Metz's historical analysis which was just emerging when Davis provided his summary analysis. In his most recent theology

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[72] Metz, The Emergent Church, 68.

[73] Davis, Theology and Political Society, 44.

Metz has focused on the negative aspects of the modern history of freedom and the technological and supposedly "enlightened" world it has brought about. Although he does not reject his earlier teachings on secularization and political theology, he does radically modify his understanding of oppression in the light of his new analytical findings.

FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS

We will now present Metz's understanding of oppression through a treatment of the following areas:

1. The content of his most recent analytical findings concerning:
   a) his teaching on the "anthropology of domination".
   b) the character of modern consciousness.
   c) the overall context of Germany and the world.
   d) the present situation of the Church in Germany.
2. A summary presentation of his present understanding of oppression.

Anthropology of Domination

No matter how positive an interpretation Metz gave to the phenomenon of secularization, nevertheless, he still cautioned that

> involving oneself with the world is not automatically transformed into an involvement with God, but remains, as it were, caught in the pure secularity of the world.[74]

Metz recognized that Christians must always remember that Jesus was unjustly crucified by the citizens of this world and must, therefore, guard against an overly optimistic view of historical existence:

> The Christian understanding of history stands beneath the sign of the cross, which means also under the sign of the constant protest within the world against God.[75]

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[74] Metz, Theology of the World, 43.

[75] Metz, Theology of the World, 17.

We can see how Metz believed that Christian involvement in the world remains ambiguous:

> Thus the world appears, on the one hand, as the area in which sin and the powers that are God's enemies reveal themselves and operate, the world as the manifestation of evil, and, on the other hand, as the scene of the revelation and operation of the saving God, the world of the manifestation of salvation.[76]

Although Metz emphasized the positive contributions of the modern history of freedom in his theology of the world he nevertheless realized that this freedom could easily be abused:

> Not only is he [man], as a subject, in charge of the hominization process but he is more and more in danger of himself being degraded to the object of all this planning and experimenting subjection and regimentation.[77]

All depends on the character of human praxis.

In his later analysis of the modern history of freedom Metz focuses on the habitual or structural abuse of freedom through a critique of the lifestyle of the bourgeois citizen. Metz defines "anthropology of domination" as an approach to life in which human beings understand themselves to be dominating, subjugating individuals over against nature. With this self-understanding, human knowledge becomes, above all, knowledge via domination, and human identity is formed on the praxis of control.

Metz does not trace the development of this dominating and subjugating spirit, nor does he pinpoint its exact origin, but believes it has been present from the very beginning of the modern age:

> At the beginning of what we call "the modern age,"...there unfolds embryonically and overlaid with many religious and cultural symbols--this anthropology of domination.[78]

Elsewhere he speaks of "the freedom of the Christian person," which he believes evolved out of the historical process of the Reformation, especially as a result of the

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[76] Metz, Theology of the World, 51.

[77] Metz, Theology of the World, 74.

[78] Metz, The Emergent Church, 35.

invocation and discovery of grace in freedom which the reformation brought about.[79] But he also speaks of another tradition in the modern history of freedom which he refers to as the freedom of the bourgeois citizen:

> As we know, this "freedom of the Christian person" led also, in a highly complex causal interplay, to the political freedom of the bourgeois citizen.[80]

Although Metz does not criticize the appropriation of this freedom by the bourgeoisie, his critique of the negative aspects of the modern German and world context leads him to interpret the modern history of freedom in a dualistic fashion. As he tells us:

> There has developed over the centuries a historically powerful bourgeois Christianity marked by a dualism between the world of grace and the world of the senses. There has developed a graceless form of humanity, strictly orientated to property, competition, and success, with grace overarching the whole.[81]

Metz referred to this graceless religion based on the privatized and dominating lifestyle of the middle-class as <u>bourgeois</u> religion. With this graceless humanity

> praxis developed not as a praxis of liberation, but as praxis of control...in the interest of the market.[82]

Here we see how Metz has linked this anonymous group of "dis-graced" human beings to the economic system of capitalism. Who are the actual subjects of this group? Metz does not say. Instead, he implicates a broad sector of the population under the vague designation of "bourgeoisie" or "middle-class". For example, he tells us that

> his [the middle-class citizen's] ability to control now has hardly any remaining receptive aspects and he is already able to dominate almost everything in the natural world and in human history. His practical understanding is orientated almost exclusively towards models that are based on the control of nature.[83]

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[79] Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 57.

[80] Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 57.

[81] Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 53.

[82] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 43.

[83] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 29.

This principle of subjugation not only causes

> a poisoning through unrestricted technical exploitation of the outer nature surrounding man, but also a poisoning of the inner nature of man himself.

This "poisoning" is reflected in a false self-identity:

> an identity thus formed through the principles of domination and subjugation makes the individual profoundly disconnected and, in the strict sense of the term, egoistic.[84]

Metz characterizes this disconnected identity of the bourgeois citizen as an approach to life that downplays any value that does not flow from the principle of domination:

> All non-dominating human virtues such as gratitude and friendliness, the capacity for suffering and sympathy, grief and tenderness...recede into the background.[85]

Metz links this "dominating" spirit with the bourgeois citizen, who is both disconnected and egoistic. We can see how Metz's anthropology of domination is basically an extension of his earlier critique of privatized religion: privitization and domination are the two sides of the middle-class way of life.

This transition in emphasis from a critique of the "private" to a critique of "domination" is essentially a shift from a critique of the individual to a critique of a social class, the "middle-class". As Metz tells us:

> Criticism of the middle-class Church is not a denunciation of individual middle-class Christians. On the contrary, our theological critique presumes that the middle-class first world Christian thinks more of himself and his religion than bourgeois society and its religion.[86]

Metz does not replace his reflections on "privatization" (the critique of which he held to be the primary task of his early political theology), but extends them to include the collective force of this privatized way of life on society

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[84] Metz, The Emergent Church, 35. Emphasis mine.

[85] Metz, The Emergent Church, 35. Metz's analysis of "dehumanization" reflects an influence from Marx's teaching on commodity relations.

[86] Metz, "Base-Church and Bourgeois Religion," Theology Digest, [vol.29, 1981], 205.

and the Church.

What are the social structures that perpetrate and sustain this private and dominating lifestyle of the middle-class? According to Metz it is

> supported by a new principle which regulates and underpins all social relationships--the principle of exchange. Production, trade and consumption are all determined by this middle-class principle of exchange.[87]

He goes on to say that

> all other values, which may have had a decisive effect on society in the past...no longer directly contribute to the functioning of the middle-class society of exchange [and]...have receded into the sphere of private individual freedom.[88]

Metz believes that the freedom of the Christian person achieved in the historical period of the Reformation was later taken over by the bourgeoisie and used in the interest of personal power and control:

> our liberal-Capitalistic economy of barter and competition has used this bourgeois individualism to conquer, not only the economic sector, but also the souls of people as well.[89]

Although Metz identifies the economic system of free enterprise as the sustainer and perpetrator of this oppressive spirit of domination, he still has little to say concerning the economic structures of society. Nevertheless, his attempt to interject his ideas on the dominating spirit present in modern consciousness into a concrete social context leads him to address and attack the middle-class citizen as the best example of what he has theorized.

This interest in the actual world of social structures reflects the extent to which Metz has moved toward a more praxis-centered theology. As we have pointed out earlier, this shift in theological method corresponds to a shift in his interpretation of the modern history of freedom.

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[87] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 35.

[88] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 35, 37.

[89] Metz, The Emergent Church, 91.

Metz believes that there is a sector of humanity which is graceless; a sector driven by egoism, individualism and the need to dominate. All those who constitute this class appear to be middle-class, some of whom are bourgeois Christians.

Analysis of Modern World Context

In a general overview Metz tells us that the modern era is characterized by,

> the atomic threat, the arms race madness, the destruction of the environment, the scarcity of resources, the crisis of growth, the almost unmanageable dialectic between ecology and economy, the spread of terror, and above all the threat of a global struggle for resources in what is called the North-South conflict.[90]

Virtually all these traits result from the use of modern science and technology for the purposes of control and domination:

> Modern scientific knowledge is marked by the model of a dominative knowledge of nature, and in this view man understands himself anthropologically above all as the subject exercising control over nature.[91]

He believes that the whole business of technology and progressive developments is getting out of control and is actually turning back upon the subjects who have created it:

> It is a characteristic of man's situation today...that there is a serious threat that he will cease to be the subject of the processes of technological civilization and become their product. What seems to be happening is that man, as the subject who plans and controls technology and science, is becoming controlled by them.[92]

The consequences of this shift from "man the dominator" to "man the dominated" are chaotic:

> When technological and economic processes are left to their own nature, laws and our political and social control systems break down: dying cities, ruined environments, population explosions, chaotic information channels, an increasingly aggressive and vicious intensification of the North-South conflict, leading possibly to a new outcome of the East-West power struggle, and so on.[93]

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[90] Metz, The Emergent Church, 70.

[91] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 111.

[92] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 101.

Metz's analysis of the overall world context extends little beyond what might be gleaned from a good newspaper on any given day. There is no discussion of the causal relationship between the spirit of domination and the actual systems of control or exploitation. Neither does Metz address the question of social class and status in his analysis of the German and World context, except in vague generalizations. It is in his critique of modern consciousness that Metz provides his clearest analysis of the modern world context, especially in his treatment of the present consciousness of Christians in Germany.

Present Situation of the Church

Although Metz does not present a detailed treatment of how the symbols and values of German society affect and influence individuals or groups in society, he does recognize the extensive influence which the bourgeois way of life has had on present-day Christians in Germany.

He tells us that today "religion does not lay claim to the bourgeois; instead, the bourgeois lays claim to religion."[94] He goes on to say that

> Christianity as bourgeois religion is not the religion of the Gospel; it is rather the creation of the bourgeoisie and of bourgeois unapproachability in regard to religion.[95]

This bourgeois or "middle-class" view of life has had such a widespread effect on German Catholics that it has virtually replaced Christian values and beliefs with those of the middle-class citizen:

> A middle-class concept of praxis has to a great extent replaced the authentically Christian concept of freedom and praxis that is critical of society. In other words, it has reduced the Christian concept to the level of the private subject existing without problems in society and to that of individual moral righteousness.[96]

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[93] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 100.

[94] Metz, The Emergent Church, 83.

[95] Metz, The Emergent Church, 4.

[96] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 28.

Although Metz does not say that this middle-class concept of praxis has totally replaced the authentic Christian concept of freedom and praxis, he does believe that it is prevalent enough to constitute a severe crisis within the present-day Catholic Church. He believes there is a split in Church life between what people profess to follow, and what they actually follow:

> Under the cloak of bourgeois religion, there is a widening split within the Church between the messianic virtues of Christianity which are publicly proclaimed, prescribed, and believed in by the Church (conversion and discipleship, love and acceptance of suffering) and the actual value-structures and goals of the bourgeois way of life (autonomy, property, stability, success).[97]

Christians living in the heart of such a bourgeois world have compromised the radical message of conversion and discipleship in one of the two following ways: either by accomodating to the values and beliefs of middle-class society, or by acquiring more and more the character of a sect. There can be considerable overlap in these two positions since they do not constitute clearly definable groups of Christians in the Church, but according to Metz, they do reveal the dominant characteristics of the overall situation of the Church in modern developed countries such as Germany:

> Church life in the developed world is tending to develop more and more into two patterns--on the one hand there is the Church with the liberal touch serving the middle-class in its need for celebration and, on the other, there is the anxious, traditional Church as a sect.[98]

Although Metz does not provide anything but a few passing comments on his analysis of this split, it seems that the sectarian qualities belong primarily to the official Church. They express themselves in an obvious reluctance to take new steps in Church policy or strategic projects:

> The life of the Church is characterized by a fear of powers and processes that are not understood. This anxiety has sapped the courage of Christians to take new steps, encourage the development of

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[97] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 68.

[98] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 68.

> new, alternative forms of Christian praxis and to make new religious and political experiments.[99]

Elsewhere Metz tells us that "stabilization through fear characterizes the process in which this Church of ours has been involved in recent years."[100]

Two major symptoms of an increasingly sectarian attitude in the German Church Metz sees as 1) a non-creative preservation of traditions, in other words, a pure traditionalism, and 2) a growing inability or unwillingness to have new experiences and to apply them critically to a self-understanding of the Church and its constitutions and documents.[101] As a result of this process of stabilization, the Church "is still a strong sphere of influence, but less and less a people."[102]

By not confronting the problems facing Chrisians living in present-day Germany the Church has lost a great deal of its relevance. It presents itself as a

> monolithic, over-institutionalized [Church]... determined more by regulation than by inspiration, and more by rigorism than by radicalism.[103]

We can see that Metz believes that the Church is presently facing a severe crisis. It is "not a crisis of the contents of faith, but rather a crisis of the Christian subjects and contents, the imitation of Christ."[104] The Church has lost touch with the needs of the people and the demands of the Gospel. This loss has resulted, according to Metz, in the widespread disappearance of an authentic Church:

> The Church is paying the price of protecting its people too much. It is paying the price of letting the people become too little the subject of the Church, of allowing the voice of the

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[99] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 68.

[100] Metz, Followers of Christ, 32.

[101] Metz, Faith in History and Society 97.

[102] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 137; See also Metz, Followers of Christ, 56.

[103] Metz, The Emergent Church, 73.

[104] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 165. See also 76.

> history of the life and suffering of the people to become stifled and of letting the Church become "the Church for the people" rather than "the Church of the people."[105]

For this reason, there is a growing number of Christians in Germany who no longer see themselves as "Church":

> However much it is stressed that the Church is the people of God and the universal priesthood of all believers, and however much emphasis is placed on the importance of lay people in the Church, the number of those who really feel themselves to be Church is nevertheless becoming smaller and smaller.[106]

As Metz reports, "A silent falling away at the roots is spreading,"[107] and "the people are identifying less and less with the Church."[108] Metz sees this crisis happening throughout the entire Church, but nowhere is it more obvious than in the actual parish communities that comprise the diocesan Church:

> The parish community as <u>family</u> is threatened by the same fate which already seems to have overtaken the individual family: it is losing its young people; in other words, it is no longer able to integrate the young into itself with their criticisms, their alternative mentality, and their attempts at political emancipation.[109]

Metz is highly critical of the structures of parish community, and faults the Church for this exodus of the young away from the organized Church. He tells us that

> Parish communities...have become...organizations where contact among people is lost, where a dangerous alienation and a private isolation reign.[110]

Now that we have presented the basic elements of Metz's theological development, and the primary aspects of his overall analysis, we can sum up the essential character of his understanding of oppression. This will provide a clearer frame of reference for our treatment of his

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105 Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 137, and Metz, <u>Followers of Christ</u>, 56.

106 Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 97.

107 Metz, <u>Followers of Christ</u>, 56.

108 Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 137.

109 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 7.

110 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 92-93.

liberation process.

Summary Analysis of Oppression

From our treatment of Metz's theological development and from his analysis of the historical and social processes that have formed the modern world, we can see that the Church is in a crisis situation. Bourgeois religion is the "religion of the day" and a growing number of people are leaving a Church that is more and more closing in upon itself. We have discussed how Metz's theology of the world and early political theology were constructed upon a highly favourable analysis of the modern history of freedom. Attention has also been drawn to the far greater emphasis in his later theology on the negative aspects of this same historical period. We have dealt with this negative critique of the modern history of freedom in Metz's teaching on the 1) anthropology of domination 2) the overall context of the modern world, and c) his analysis of bourgeois religion. We have also shown that the phenomena of privatization and domination together form the spirit of both bourgeois society and bourgeois religion, and that this spirit has manifested itself in the various crisis situations facing the Church and the modern world. Metz has attributed the cause of virtually all these oppressive situations to the middle-class citizen who is the established subject of control in our present-day world.

In order to grasp the essential nature of Metz's understanding of oppression, we will now discuss a few of the more obvious signs of human oppression caused by middle-class values and lifestyle.

Metz believes that the principle of subjugation which sustains and permeates the middle-class way of life not only causes a poisoning of the outer nature surrounding human beings, but also of the very nature of human beings themselves. This poisoning might be described as the effect

that middle class values have on the inner or spiritual life of human beings. What oppresses is not what is inflicted by others, but rather, what is self-inflicted when the way of life of the middle-class is embraced. Consequently, Metz tells us that

> it is not suffering as such which alienates us from ourselves and robs us of life--it is rather the reification of suffering, the pure flight from suffering.[111]

Or again,

> It is not mourning and fear which alienate us from ourselves and rob us of life, but rather the repression of fear and grief, the flight from mourning.[112]

Even suffering, fear and mourning become of little concern to the middle-class on account of their lack of market-value. This is certainly a key dimension of how Metz believes an anthropology of domination destroys the inner life of human beings: by the <u>suppression</u> of non-productive human emotions and/or virtues.[113]

Metz further tells us that citizens living in developed countries such as Germany need to be freed: 1) not from powerlessness, but from power, 2) not from sufferings, but from apathy, 3) not from what is lacking, but from consumerism, and 4) not from poverty, but from riches.[114]

Still, all this is only a manifestation of a far more central problem facing modern human beings--a problem of <u>subjective identity</u>. The focal point of Metz's overall understanding of oppression can be found in his later critique of the modern history of freedom, especially concerning the historical movement referred to as the Enlightenment. According to Metz,

> theological understanding of the Enlightenment seems to consist of an ultimate acceptance of the triumph of the Enlightenment over the Christian Church or of the replacement of Christianity by

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111. Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 38.

112 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 41.

113 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 35.

114 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 72.

the Enlightenment.[115]

He goes on to say, however, that

> what is hardly recognized at all is that there is an inner dialectical tension in emancipation, Enlightenment and secularization, and that the Enlightenment has therefore given rise to problems over and above what it has itself raised to the level of a problem.[116]

What Metz means by problems "over and above" might be explained as follows: emancipation and Enlightenment did give rise to a new subject, but this new subject was only the "middle-class" subject. As he puts it,

> the pathos of the Enlightenment was certainly directed towards making all men come of age as subjects of the use of their intellect.[117]

However, he does not believe that the Enlightenment was "a coming of age for those without property, the population living on the land or the peasant classes, who were almost all illiterate at the time when the great encyclopaedias were written."[118] "What asserted itself" he tells us, "was ultimately a new elite or a new aristocracy."[119] It was this new elite (the middle-class) that eventually became established as the subject in control of our present world, as well as the host for the privatized and dominating spirit dealt with above. Metz believes that secular emancipatory movements have been unable to recognize the limits of human activity. They seem to have no conscious awareness of how human sin is inextricably intertwined with political and social movements that strive for freedom and political self-

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[115] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 26. Metz openly admits that in his theology of the world and early political theology he too was overly optimistic concerning the possibilities of secular emancipation. See Metz, Faith in History and Society, 71.

[116] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 26. This is a significant turnaround from his earlier political theology where, according to Johns, "He concerns himself specifically with what final acceptance of the Enlightenment and the spirit of rationality would mean for the Church." Man in the World, 170.

[117] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 43.

[118] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 43.

[119] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 43.

determination. This deficiency in secular systems and movements for emancipation has given rise to incredible oppression, culminating ultimately in the loss of human freedom in terms of subjective identity:

> Emancipation-strivings without soteriology become an ever more abstract and unreal mechanism for excusing evils or declaring their non-existence. This means quite simply that the freedom of man as agent is denied.[120]

In a similar manner, it is the middle-class Christian who is the subject of present-day religion, or that resemblance to religion Metz refers to as bourgeois religion.

According to Metz, every oppressive or distorted aspect of the modern world situation, both in the Church and the world, stems from this underlying problem of the established power of the middle-class subject. Since middle-class identity is based on principles and values of control and domination, Metz believes that they (the middle-class) have used this power to keep others oppressed, or in other words, without true identity. Metz describes the problem as

> The silent disappearance of the subject and the death of the individual in the anonymous compulsions and structures of a world that is constructed of unfeeling rationality and consequently allows identity, memory and consciousness of the human soul to become extinct.[121]

We can see that Metz's earlier optimism regarding the context of the modern secularized world has been replaced by an analysis that reflects a distinct disillusionment with the ability of the Enlightenment to bring true liberation.

Metz has drawn attention to those Christians who are bound by the bourgeois way of life. Since they are not bound by force, but rather choice, he therefore believes that they have the freedom to take responsibility for their affiliation with oppressive values and structures. The extent to which they participate in bourgeois values and structures is the extent to which Metz sees them as

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[120] Metz, "Emancipation by Universal Suffering," 245.

[121] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 152.

oppressors.

Metz has also drawn attention to the problem of the loss of subjective identity. Still, he has not indicated whether bourgeois Christians (who are subjects having at least a degree of control in the system of capitalism) lack identity as free subjects, or whether there are other groups or classes in Germany who are victims of this form of oppression. It is, however, from this two-fold analysis of oppression, the values and structures of bourgeois religion and the loss of subjective indentity, that Metz attempts to formulate a theological process of liberation.

THE PROCESS OF LIBERATION

In the following sections we will present the content of Metz's theoloy as it relates to his overall liberation process.

Before we deal with Metz's treatment of theclogical themes, the general framework of his understanding of liberation will first be presented. This framework emerges from the context of Metz's analysis of oppression presented in the preceding sections. In this way at least something of an overall view of Metz's understanding of liberation will be grasped.

Outline of the Liberation Process

Metz is far more interested in confronting the crisis of bourgeois religion than in providing a critique of social structures. His critique is directed towards Christians living in the structures of the Church. His emphasis falls on "disaffiliation" from those values and structures based on bourgeois principles, with little mention of transforming the structures of society.

Metz believes that the modern history of freedom has gone astray in allowing privatization and domination to control the reins of modern freedom. As he puts it:

> Once man had taken historical destiny in his own hands, the incriminating presence of the history of suffering did not disappear. Unhappiness and deprivation, misery and evil, oppression and suffering have remained and have intensified and increased to planetary proportions.[122]

Given this analysis, Metz believes that the modern history of freedom is in need of an historical corrective which he attempts to provide with his teaching on the history of redemption. Metz believes that it is only this that can answer for the sufferings that humans have endured throughout history, especially the suffering of death.

Without a history of redemption Metz holds that "every history of freedom is reduced to the level of natural history and tendentiously aborts itself"[123] either by forcing human beings into a "transcendental suspension...of historical responsibility", or by subjugating humans to such an extent that they lose their identity as historical subjects.[124]

Having established the need for a history of redemption as a historical corrective to the modern history of freedom, Metz then asks the all important question: "How does redemption enter into the critical task of liberation which is to be accomplished within the contemporary history of emancipation?"[125] His most recent writings are an attempt to provide a theological answer to this question.

He begins by telling us that "Christianity in its message of redemption does not offer definitive meaning for the unexpiated sufferings of the past." Rather, "it narrates...a distinct history of freedom: freedom on the basis of a redeeming liberation through God in the cross of Jesus."[126] These two dimensions of "narrative" and "history"

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[122] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 124.

[123] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 129.

[124] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 127. See also, Metz, "Emancipation by Universal Suffering," 243-248.

[125] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 128.

[126] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 129.

describe the way in which Metz believes Christian redemption should be understood:

> Redemption is a reality which must be set forth by remembrance and narrative...[because] Christianity as a sharing of life among those redeemed in Christ was never a sharing by interpretation and speculation, but by remembrance and narration of the suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus.[127]

Here we can see how Christology will be a central theme in Metz's liberation process. Christology, however, is by no means the only dimension of this process:

> I suggest discussing a liberating redemption, and through Jesus Christ, an emancipatory, revolutionary and critical self-liberation of man, and a soteriological and emancipatory history of freedom, within the framework of what I term sweepingly and with some hesitation, "the history of human suffering."[128]

When Metz tells us that all this is to be discussed within the framework of "the history of human suffering," he is hinting at the need for a parallel tradition that would replace the memories of the bourgeoisie (memories of power and control) with those of the Christian tradition (memories of suffering and persecution, and salvation in Christ). He does not say that the history of human suffering, and "the history of redemption" should replace secular emancipation, but sees in this approach a means whereby secular emancipation and Christian redemption may be reconciled within Christian theology:

> Perhaps a reconciliation of the two antithetical movements of secular emancipation and Christian redemption can be found in the formula "history of human suffering"...[by forming] a least common denominator of efforts to free mankind whether by revolution or by redemption.[129]

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[127] Metz, "Emancipation by Universal Suffering," 246.

[128] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 123.

[129] Metz, "Emancipation by Universal Suffering," 244. There seems to be a couple of weaknesses in this particular quotation. In the first place the suggestion of reconciling "antithetical" movements seems semantically impossible. Secondly the phrase "a least common denominator" seems to suggest a minimilist position. Since neither of these characteristics are compatible with Metz's teaching on the compatibility of faith and secularity, and his emphasis on universal solidarity, the suspicion is that the translator made an unfortunate choice of words. Because I was unable to locate a German

Metz is also hinting at his threefold categorization of solidarity, memory, and narrative as fundamental and essential categories for a practical fundamental theology. He believes that all three categories are mutually interdependent:

> It is only when they are taken together that memory, narrative and solidarity can be regarded as the basic categories of a practical fundamental theology. Memory and narrative only have a practical character when they are considered together with solidarity, and solidarity has no specifically cognitive status without memory and narrative.[130]

Metz believes that it is only when a liberating-redemptive process is rooted in the concrete solidarity of community that authentic liberation and redemption can occur.

Anthropological Revolution

Based on the theological foundation outlined above Metz attempts to formulate a theological response to the problem of bourgeois religion and its "anthropology of domination". For Metz, what is needed is a radical conversion of hearts, a process he refers to as an "anthropological revolution." How does Metz define this revolution? He tells us that

> Perhaps we could describe it as a revolutionary formation process for a new subjectivity.[131]

Although Metz adds that this definition is certainly open to misunderstanding, he is basically referring to a process of liberation which attempts

> to achieve a new relationship to ourselves, to our natural and social environment, which is not one of domination and exploitation.[132]

Metz is very precise in clarifying the essential character and fundamental direction of this liberation process:

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original of this article a solution to this problem will have to be forth-coming.

130 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 183.

131 Metz, The Emergent Church; 42.

132 Metz, The Emergent Church, 43.

> The process of liberation generated by the anthropological revolution differs, both in its inner content and in its outer direction, from the ideas of social revolution current among us. For this revolution is not, in fact, concerned with liberating us from our wealth and our totally excessive prosperity. It is not a liberation from what we lack, but from our consumerism in which we are ultimately consuming our very selves.[133]

This is a key quotation for understanding Metz's overall view of liberation from oppression. The context is Germany and the message is directed towards bourgeois Christians, especially Roman Catholic Church members and officials. The analysis of oppression upon which this theology of liberation is based is bourgeois religion, and the message suggests a process of liberation "from" rather than a liberation "to". It is by no means simply a process of personal conversion, but

> affects the whole societal construction of our reality, of our political and economic systems.[134]

Metz further tells us that

> All the major social, economic and ecological questions can be resolved today only through a kind of anthropological revolution.[135]

In presenting the actual contents of Metz's anthropological revolution it is necessary to deal with the following themes: 1.Grace, 2.Conversion, 3.Christology, 4.Eschatology, and 5.Ecclesiology. As we shall see, Metz's understanding of grace as a "sensuous" grace, his teaching on conversion as a "communitarian" process, and his emphasis on "imitating" Christ in a ongoing historical and social praxis naturally lead to the elaboration of a "practical" eschatology and ecclesiology. Since the three categories of Memory, Narrative and Solidarity are <u>practical</u> categories in so far as they form the most simple practical model for interpreting and understanding the Christian life, they will be dealt with <u>after</u> presenting Metz's understanding of grace, conversion and Christology. We will then take a look

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[133] Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 42.

[134] Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 37.

[135] Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 61.

at what Metz has to say concerning the Church of the near future, both in his eschatology as well as his ideas concerning political and pastoral strategy.

In treating these themes separately we must bear in mind that this is only being done for the purpose of clarification. Actually, there is a close relationship between these themes, as well as considerable overlap. If certain common ideas are often repeated it is only to draw attention to this fundamental unity between themes. The aim is to arrive at a picture of Metz's overall theology of liberation.

Grace

Metz's understanding of grace has undergone a significant transition from his earlier to his later writings. In what we have dealt with earlier as the second stage in Metz's theology (theology of the world), Metz's understanding of grace focused on the ability of human beings to accept or to reject the gift of liberating grace offered by God. Metz's understanding of the nature of this gift was distinctively ontological: that is, an understanding of grace as being:

> But grace is freedom, it bestows upon things the scarcely measured depths of their own being. It calls things out of all their sinful alienation into their own.[136]

Elsewhere Metz illustrates his understanding of grace with an analogical example of human friendship:

> Let us think of the relation between two people in friendship. The more deeply one is "accepted" by the other and is "taken into" his own existence, the more he discovers himself, the more radically he is made free for his own possibilities.[137]

This existential view of grace was also present in his work Poverty of Spirit, published in 1968. Here Metz tells us that grace is being which "is entrusted to him [man] as a summons, which he is to accept and consciously

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136 Metz, Theology of the World, 50.

137 Metz, Theology of the World, 27.

acknowledge."[138]

After this early ontological view of grace, an approach that was obviously rooted in the theological anthropology of his theology of the world, Metz has virtually nothing to say on grace up to his most recent book The Emergent Church, where he focuses on the sensual and political dimension of grace.

Metz appeals to scripture as his first source for this political interpretation of grace:

> In the biblical narratives and events, grace is encountered as a sense-related, historical social experience,[139]

and Catholic tradition as his second source:

> Catholicism holds firmly to the insight that we cannot remove the senses from grace without obscuring or even destroying the presence of grace itself.[140]

Metz acknowledges and relies on Catholic teaching for the inclusion of the senses in his discussion of grace, but he also points out that this teaching is by no means beyond criticism:

> Yet Catholicism's connectedness with the senses appears in fact to be insufficiently imbued with the yeast of freedom, that freedom of God's children.[141]

This "lack of freedom" shows itself in a Church which becomes

> so distorted by sacramentalism and ritualism, so monolithic and regimented...[that] the human being is no longer present there at all in his spontaneity and freedom.[142]

Metz attempts to reaffirm the liberating quality of grace by linking the reception of grace to a sense-related praxis that is rooted in a sensuous, concrete, historical social context. This view of grace "protests against the

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[138] Metz, Poverty of Spirit, [New York: Paulist Press, 1968], 5.

[139] Metz, The Emergent Church, 54.

[140] Metz, The Emergent Church, 56.

[141] Metz, The Emergent Church, 56.

[142] Metz, The Emergent Church, 56.

domination of invisible grace" and leads to a

> visible religion, festive religion, religion with liturgies based on contact and accompanied by the delight in symbols and myths.[143]

This approach demands that grace be "seen" in the liturgical community life of the Church.

It is this unification of grace and the senses that Metz sees as the proper Christian response to bourgeois religion. In fact, the invocation of grace in the senses defines the essential character of his anthropological revolution:

> The invocation of grace in the sensuous praxis of our lives signifies essentially the separation from our bourgeois Christianity.[144]

Metz believes that it is only after individuals undergo this transition that they have the capacity to return grace to politics in a credible fashion.[145] What Metz means by "credible fashion", is in such a way that it "makes possible for us a new life of solidarity,"[146] where we gain the capacity "not to see ourselves and evaluate ourselves with our own eyes but with the eyes of our victims."[147] This is impossible without the invocation of grace in the sensuous dimension of human life for, according to Metz, when grace is not acknowledged and embraced in sensucus experience, then neither can there be any real acknowledgment or acceptance of those who (in their sensuous life) suffer:

> We minimize grace when we snatch it away from the senses and thereby from the social suffering of humanity.[148]

Although grace must first transform human hearts, Metz clearly sees the need for grace within a new social and political praxis:

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[143] Metz, The Emergent Church, 52-53.

[144] Metz, The Emergent Church, 56.

[145] Metz, The Emergent Church, 61.

[146] Metz, The Emergent Church, 61.

[147] Metz, The Emergent Church, 61.

[148] Metz, The Emergent Church, 51.

> And when Christians truly believe in grace, in its free and liberating presence, in its intimate connection with our senses, then it must also mean that in society as well they do not just live under the anonymous constraints of the issues, but under the "constraints" of grace.[149]

Now that we have a basic understanding of Metz's teaching on the nature of liberating grace we can take a more in-depth look at how he incorporates this theology into a process of conversion.

Conversion

As we have seen, Metz believes that contemporary German Christians are in need of being freed from their excessive consumerism, egoism, and false self-identity based on domination and control. We will now deal with his teaching on what an experience and process of conversion actually involves, and how it provides a solution to the problems of oppression he has discovered in his analysis.

Metz believes that "an authentic turning to religion would have to mean a turning to conversion, to the messianic praxis of love."[150] What is required is a radical change of hearts. He refuses to accept the notion that an increase in moral or legal rigorism will suffice:

> It is clear...that the rigorism of the Church in its struggle against the abuses of bourgeois religion offers no salvation as long as the challenge of radical conversion is not clearly faced up to and risked as a community.[151]

Note that Metz specifies community in this process, for he does not believe that conversion, or a return to the "messianic praxis of love", is simply an individual experience or process:

> The individual on his own can do very little in this area; conversion in the sense indicated here, can only be achieved together with others.[152]

Why is this so? Because

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[149] Metz, The Emergent Church, 61.

[150] Metz, The Emergent Church, 14.

[151] Metz, The Emergent Church, 6.

[152] Metz, The Emergent Church, 72.

> the human being in this situation who undertakes a radical revision of life, whose heart is to be changed here, is not a being existing outside history and society.[153]

As we might surmise, Metz believes that the character of this conversion, or change of hearts, must be the same as the radical experience of conversion recounted in the Gospels:

> It goes through people like a shock, reaching down into the direction their lives are taking, into their established system of needs, and so finally into the situations in society they have helped to create; it damages and disrupts one's own self-interests and aims at a fundamental revision of one's habitual way of life.[154]

This radical conversion affects the entire life of those who undergo such an experience, and in itself, provides an alternative to the oppressive way of life of the bourgeoisie--a way of life based on the values and lifestyle of the middle-class.

For Metz, the Eucharist is the food that nourishes us throughout this conversion process, and helps us to overcome the private and dominating values of bourgeois religion:

> The Eucharistic "bread of life" nourishes us toward love. It wants to bring love back into the life of domination, and exorcize that interiorized capitalism, that attitude of grasping and struggling for advantage.[155]

Since the Eucharist is the central unifying and strengthening power at the heart of this process whereby a group or community of Christians undergoes a change of hearts, no authentic conversion process can ignore those who sit at the same Eucharistic table, yet are victims of oppression or poverty. Here Metz situates the conversion process within a world context with the poor and oppressed of third world countries. The disaffiliation from excessive wealth and the spirit of consumerism is the realistic response such a situation calls for.

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153 Metz, The Emergent Church, 72.

154 Metz, The Emergent Church, 3.

155 Metz, The Emergent Church, 40.

> The direct struggle of the poor and oppressed there must be matched here by a struggle and resistance against ourselves, against the ingrained ideals of always having more, of always having to increase our affluence.[156]

Not to undergo such an anthropological revolution is to contribute to the sufferings of "poor and long-exploited human beings."[157] There is no neutral ground with regard to the poor and oppressed, and although at one point Metz tells his German readers that Christians in Germany may in fact be "oppressed oppressors,"[158] he focuses principally on the idea that they must be liberated from being oppressors, not oppressed.

Metz's whole approach to conversion can be simplified by referring to it as a "process of disaffiliation". Although he tells us that this conversion is to be understood as a turning to the "messianic praxis of love", this praxis is primarily interpreted as a liberation "from" all those undesirable values and ideals belonging to the middle-class. This is the initial movement or direction of his liberation process. Again, the poor and oppressed from third world countries have a definite role in shaping the character of this disaffiliation:

> But this revolution, this struggle against ourselves, against our dominating-exploiting identity, is simultaneously and indivisibly the fundamental praxis of our solidarity with the poor and exploited peoples of this earth.[159]

Metz explicitly states that a conversion of hearts and a corresponding revision of life "has certainly to take on an organized political form,"[160] but before one can speak of political strategies for liberation, it is first necessary to have a vision of life that offers a practical foundation for concrete policies. To speak of a conversion process

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[156] Metz, The Emergent Church, 12. See also vii.

[157] Metz, The Emergent Church, 41.

[158] Metz, The Emergent Church, 13.

[159] Metz, The Emergent Church, 43.

[160] Metz, The Emergent Church, vii.

away from the habitual way of life of the bourgeoisie certainly implies the necessity of a practical alternative based on a new set of values and beliefs.

Therefore, before we deal with the practical strategies Metz proposes for liberation, his teaching on the formative structure of conversion must first be presented. The practical or formative structure of Metz's most recent understanding of conversion is the "imitation and following of Christ".

The Nature of Christological Praxis

Liberation and salvation occur only when Christians are involved in the praxis of following Christ. This is the essence of Metz's whole understanding of the liberation process. In this section, we are therefore concerned with defining Metz's understanding of the nature of this Christological "praxis", as well as what he believes this praxis to involve in concrete terms. He begins by telling us that

> The inviting logos of Christianity does not in any sense compel. It has a narrative structure with a practical and liberating intention. If this is expressed in Christological terms, it means that the salvation that is founded "for all men" in Christ does not become universal via an idea, but via the intelligible power of a praxis, the praxis of following Christ.[161]

This is an important statement for understanding Metz's Christology. When Metz tells us that salvation does not become universal "via an idea" but rather through the power of the praxis of following Christ, he makes it clear that the liberating grace offered by God becomes incarnate in human life in the actual praxis of imitating Christ. This Christological approach concentrates on the "visible" expression of liberating grace in the liturgical life and ongoing praxis of Christians following Christ.

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[161] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 165.

Metz understands the praxis of following Christ to be a dialectic: "a dialectic of theory and practice, a dialectic of subject and object."[162] Within this dialectic, primacy is again given to practice:

> Essentially it [Christianity] expresses a practical knowledge. In this sense every Christology is subject to the primacy of practice. This one could term Christological dialectic or the dialectic of following Christ.[163]

Metz further defines this dialectic as a tension between knowing and imitating Christ.

> It is only when they imitate Christ that Christians know who it is to whom they have given their consent and who saves them.[164]

Since grace is mediated through our sensuous, historical and social lives, this dialectical process is unavoidable. In this historically-rooted context, Christ is

> not only a supreme being worthy of worship, but also, and always, a way. Every attempt to know him, to understand him, is therefore always a journey, a following.[165]

To follow Jesus is to embark on a journey. To make him simply the object of our worship or admiration is to betray this dialectical process:

> To follow Jesus means ultimately not only to admire him, to take him as a model...but something more radical and more dangerous: putting him on, putting Christ on.[166]

For Metz, this radical "putting on of Christ" is demanded of all Christians, not simply those who make religious vows."[167]

Not only is following Christ a "dialectical" process, it is also a process that has both mystical and political dimensions:

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[162] Metz, Followers of Christ, 40.

[163] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 51.

[164] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 52.

[165] Metz, Followers of Christ, 39.

[166] Metz, Followers of Christ, 34.

[167] Metz, Followers of Christ, 23.

> Following Christ always has a two-fold structure. It has a mystical element and one that is situational, one that is practical and political.[168]

It is easy to see why Metz believes that following Christ involves a practical and political dimension since he believes that both the mediation of grace and the experience of conversion must be grounded in the experience of community. Metz also, however, considers the "mystical" dimension of following Christ to be political as well:

> The mystical aspect of following Christ never takes place in a vacuum...it is not something that happens in isolation from society or apart from a particular political situation.[169]

This is so because "individual moral behaviour is in no way socially neutral or politically innocent."[170]

Following Christ is political because imitating Christ (the "way" we follow) must be a "community" process and because this imitation must express a wider experience of solidarity with all humanity, living or dead. As Metz puts it, "the Christian praxis of solidarity will always be directed towards the imitation of Christ."[171] Obviously, the converse is true as well.

Although this solidarity aims at making all humans "subjects in solidarity in the presence of God,"[172] Metz makes it clear that this praxis of solidarity, in imitation of Christ, must show a preferential option for the poor.[173]

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[168] Metz, Followers of Christ, 41-42.

[169] Metz, Followers of Christ, 43.

[170] Metz, Followers of Christ, 41.

[171] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 235.

[172] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 235.

[173] We will deal with Metz's teaching concerning the option for the poor in a subsequent section.

CATEGORIES FOR A PRACTICAL FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

We can now see how Metz believes that liberation from oppression not only involves a conversion away from the values and ideals of the middle-class way of life, but also an ongoing process of imitating and following Christ. An authentic conversion and liberation process must also be rooted in the experience of community. It is only in this context that Metz's teaching on Memory, Narrative, and Solidarity, can be fully appreciated.

From a separate treatment of each of these three categories, an overall picture of Metz's teaching on the fundamental character of the Christian way of life in community should emerge. After presenting Metz's practical fundamental theology regarding this community-based life of Christians, it will be easier to comprehend his ideas on a future process of liberation for Christians.

The History of Human Suffering

Since Metz is interested in formulating a liberating-redemption within the framework of "the history of human suffering,"[174] it is easy to understand why he holds memory to be an essential category of any practical fundamental theology. The power or "faculty" of memory is the means whereby this tradition is brought into the present.

Memory is the fundamental category that puts us in contact with the content of revelation. As Metz points out:

> The central ideas of religion, the idea of God, of truth, and of so much more, are not ideas of the twentieth century and its dominant form of reason. These ideas, if we wish to cherish them, always need the power and the loyalty of our memory and our tradition.[175]

Both the use of memory and the content of our memories are indispensable for the Christian way of life. By characterizing the tradition to be remembered as the "history of human suffering", Metz is attempting to overcome

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[174] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 123.

[175] Metz, The Emergent Church, 85.

what he sees as an obvious deficiency in the consciousness of modern-day Christians. As he points out:

> We tend consciously or unconsciously, to define history as the history of what has prevailed, as the history of the successful and the establilshed. There is hardly any reference in history as we know it to the conquered and defeated or to the forgotten or suppressed hopes of our historical existence.[176]

In fact Metz believes that the suppression of this history of human suffering is the most significant factor in the enslavement of human beings:

> The enslavement of men begins when their memories of the past are taken away. All forms of colonization are based on this principle.[177]

When people lose their tradition--the memories of their past--they also lose their identity as free subjects:

> The uprooting of slaves and their deportation helped to destroy their memories and at the same time helped to establish them successfully as slaves.[178]

Just as identity is lost when the destruction of a people's tradition occurs, Metz also believes that "the reverse is also true--identity is formed when memories are aroused."[179] When historical identity is established through the remembrance of tradition, especially through the remembrance of suffering within that tradition, then to a degree, liberation has already occurred. It is in this sense that Metz understands memory to be an essential category of theology:

> Memory operates above all as a category by which historical identity is found and <u>as a category of liberation</u>.[180]

Although many memories serve to legitimize the status quo, Metz points out that there are also memories that hold within them the seeds of liberation:

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[176] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 111.

[177] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 110. See also 66.

[178] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 66.

[179] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 66.

[180] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 67. Emphasis mine.

> There are dangerous memories, memories which make demands on us. There are memories in which earlier experiences break through to the centre-point of our lives and reveal new and dangerous insights for the present.[181]

For Christians, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus constitutes such a "dangerous" memory.

The memory of Jesus' passion and death on a cross "recalls the God of Jesus' passion as the subject of the universal history of suffering,"[182] and the memory of his victorious resurrection from the dead provides meaning and hope for the ultimate liberation of humans from death.

> Resurrection mediated by way of the memory of suffering means: the dead, those already vanquished and forgotten, have a meaning which is as yet unrealized.[183]

We can see in Metz's understanding of memory, especially the memory of Jesus' death and resurrection, the essence of his theological corrective to the modern history of secular emancipation. His insistence on the need for a liberating redemption, or a "history of redemption", is a response to to the modern history of freedom and its inability to answer for the sufferings and deaths that have occurred throughout history:

> No improvement of the condition of freedom in the world is able to do justice to the dead or effect a transformation of the injustice and the non-sense of past suffering.[184]

Only a liberating-redemption based on the memory of Jesus and his death and resurrection is capable of achieving such results.

Is this view a return to a transcendental justification of suffering by an appeal to the future promise of reward in heaven? Metz does not believe such a hope should pacify either Christian involvement in the world or the struggle for liberation:

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181 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 109.

182 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 117.

183 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 113.

184 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 128.

> The hope of Christians in a God of the living and the dead and in the power of that God to raise men from the dead...does not in any sense paralyze historical initiatives or the struggle for the state of all men as subjects. On the contrary, it acts as a guarantee for the criteria which men use again and again to oppose...prevailing unjust structures and relationships.[185]

Rather than pacifying, this memory actually gives rise to a new political consciousness: "The memory of suffering in the Christian sense...creates a social and political conscience in the interest of other's suffering,"[186] which in turn

> brings a new moral imagination into political life, a new vision of other's suffering which should mature into a generous, uncalculating partisanship on behalf of the weak and unrepresented.[187]

Metz believes that with the memory of human suffering comes a corresponding change in the way we look at the world:

> The memory of human suffering forces us to look at the public "theatrum mundi" not merely from the standpoint of the successful and the established, but from that of the conquered and the victims.[188]

This new perspective creates a strong sense of solidarity with those who have suffered, and with those who continue to suffer. This new perspective flows from the remembered history of suffering. As Metz puts it, "inasmuch as the history of suffering unites all men like a 'second nature'" it thereby "offers inspiration for a new form of solidarity, of responsibility towards those most distant from us."[189]

In light of the history of human suffering and the liberating-redemption offered through Jesus, the mission of the Church can be described in terms of the mediation of this dangerous memory:

> Memory can have a very decisive ecclesiological importance in defining the Church as the public vehicle transmitting a dangerous memory in the

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185 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 76.

186 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 115.

187 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 118.

188 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 105.

189 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 105.

systems of social life.[190]

The structural character of this mediation is primarily the linguistic mode of expression referred to as narrative. Since narrative is the principal means by which the memories of the history of suffering are recalled, Metz feels justified in giving it the status of an essential category for his practical fundamental theology. Let us now take a closer look at the category of narrative.

The Meaning and Function of Narrative

Metz defines the function of narrative in theology as "a linguistic identification of the stories of human suffering."[191] It is the mode by which the history of suffering finds embodiment in the heart of community life:

> The "mediation" of the memory of suffering is always practical. It is never purely argumentative, but always narrative in form, in other words, it takes the form of dangerous and liberating stories.[192]

If a people is to establish or sustain its identity, then the memories of its suffering must be kept alive in visible expressions of this history. Metz illustrates this conviction by way of example:

> Peasants, for example have revealed their memory of suffering in their chronicles, and citizens have made that memory visible in their art. In this way they have derived the power to resist the threat to their identity.[193]

Narrative is another example of how memories can be made visible, and thereby kept alive. For Metz, this is the essential function and purpose of narrative:

> To keep the Christian memory of redemption alive...as a dangerous and liberating memory of redeemed freedom.[194]

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[190] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 184.

[191] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 58.

[192] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 110.

[193] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 66.

[194] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 133.

As such, narrative is a constitutive aspect of the Christian community: "Christians do not primarily form an argumentative and reasoning community, but a story-telling community."[195] Even theology would be a futile exercise without the self-expression of the people through the stories they tell:

> The symbols and stories of the people are irreplaceable. Nothing will take their place if the narrative tradition is interrupted or completely broken off and the people's memories are extinguished.[196]

Because narrative is absolutely essential for both the life of the Christian community and theological reflection, Metz tells us that his apology for narrative as a category for fundamental theology is

> an attempt to make good the almost complete absense, in the German speaking countries at least, of the idea of narrative in any of the more recent theological and philosophical works of reference[197]

Metz tells us that

> stories are told by very wise men...and by little people who are oppressed or have not yet come of age. These, however, tell not only stories which tempt them to celebrate their immature dependence on their oppressed state, but also stories which are dangerous and which seek freedom.[198]

The telling of "dangerous" stories by those who are oppressed is an integral dimension of the liberation process. Such stories not only cry out for freedom in the face of oppression, but the very act of telling these stories, based on memories of suffering and persecution, constitutes a new and liberating historical identity for Christians.

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[195] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 209.

[196] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 148.

[197] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 205.

[198] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 210.

Solidarity and Option for the Poor

The "praxis" that follows from the Christian memory of human suffering is characterized and determined by the category of solidarity. It is not an attempt to introduce the Christian memory of suffering into the existing forms of political life,[199] but it does lead to the struggle for all human beings to be liberated as subjects before the presence of God:

> Christians are compelled to respond to the practical challenge of this history...[of suffering]. In its praxis what will emerge, at least partially, is that all men are called to be subjects in the presence of God.[200]

God revealed his intention of saving and liberating all human beings in Jesus. A praxis based on this foundation must, therefore, oppose any form of suppression or of institutionalized hatred that denys human beings the right (or the means) to be subjects of their own historical destiny before God.[201]

> The imperative of poverty involved in following Christ includes the assertion of a definite direction, an unequivocal option. The synod document ["Our Hope"] brings it out clearly: "It [following Christ] continually summons us afresh to a relationship of solidarity with the poor and the weak of the world we live in".[202]

This is not just a "mystical" solidarity with the poor in an abstract sense, for as Metz goes on to tell us:

> The way of following Christ that leads into poverty here leads quite unequivocally to the poor in the social and political sense: it counsels solidarity with them and with their need.[203]

Metz believes that those who wish to follow Christ must be committed to the struggle for justice "so that people can be freed from misery and oppression to become independent."[204] This commitment is carried out, not from a distance, but by

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199 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 115.

200 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 68.

201 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 67.

202 Metz, Followers of Christ, 48-49.

203 Metz, Followers of Christ, 49.

204 Metz, Followers of Christ, 54.

"being close to the oppressed and humiliated,"[205] in imitation of Christ himself who sided with the poor and oppressed.

When Metz draws our attention to Matthew 25, where the king separates the just from the unjust, he tells us that he did it according to the criterion: "as you did it (or did it not) to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it (or did it not) to me."[206] Basing his reflections on this passage, Metz tells us that the idea of following Christ in imitation of his concern for the least of the brethren reveals the close relationship between Christology and Eschatology:

> Following Christ and looking forward to the second coming belong together like the two sides of a coin. His call to follow him and our plea "come, Lord Jesus", are inseparable.[207]

He goes on to say that "one cannot more or less completely cancel or surrender one of them without compromising the other and then losing it altogether."[208]

This connection between eschatology and the praxis of the imitation of Christ indicates the extent to which Metz has founded his theology on the Christian virtue of hope. Let us now further explore the implications of Metz's Christology for his eschatology and ecclesiology. As we shall see, the Christian plea "come Lord Jesus" has definite practical and political significance both for the future of the world and for the Church.

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[205] Metz, Followers of Christ, 67.

[206] Metz, Followers of Christ, 79.

[207] Metz, Followers of Christ, 75.

[208] Metz, Followers of Christ, 78.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

In this section Metz's earlier and later eschatology will be discussed. Dealing with his present teaching in comparison with his earlier eschatology reveals how Metz's understanding of the future has undergone a transition from an abstract to a far more practical character. In the final sections of this chapter we will go on to outline Metz's teaching on Christian involvement in the world in terms of actual political and pastoral strategies for liberation.

Eschatology

In his theology of the world Metz claims that "modern man's understanding of the world is fundamentally orientated toward the future," and that "his mentality therefore is not primarily contemplative but operative."[209] He also held that this

> orientation of the modern era to the future, and the understanding of the world as history which results from this orientation, is based upon the biblical belief in the promises of God. This biblical faith demands that theology be eschatology."[210]

Metz is aware that the future is not something that happens by chance, but that it is shaped by the actions of human beings:

> But since this world comes into being through our freedom, its future seems to lie increasingly in our hands, it seems to become more and more an understanding and manipulated future."[211]

This means that human beings must involve themselves in the actual building of the future eschatological city of God:

> The eschatological city of God is <u>now</u> coming into existence, for our hopeful approach <u>builds</u> this city.[212]

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209 Metz, <u>Theology of the World</u>, 83.

210 Metz, <u>Theology of the World</u>, 87.

211 Metz, <u>Theology of the World</u>, 72.

212 Metz, <u>Theology of the World</u>, 94. Emphasis mine.

We can see that in his earlier theology Metz's eschatology was equally as optimistic as his understanding of the modern process of secularization. In a sense, his eschatology was an extension of his teaching on how Christians are called to humananize the world:

> The believer acts not only "within" the world, but he changes it, he transforms it himself within the framework of this divine promise.[213]

Even the mission of the Church is defined as working towards the building of the eschatological city of God:

> This mission achieves its future in so far as the Christian alters and "innovates" the world toward that future of God which is definitely promised to us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.[214]

This view of eschatology was based on the optimism of Christian hope. It is rooted in the praxis of Christians working and transforming the world into an ever more perfect reflection of the future kingdom of peace and justice promised by God.

Although at no time does Metz say that the future kingdom of God will be fully established through this praxis, there is still a strong emphasis on the positive contributions that such a "humanizing" influence can make.

Metz's eschatology underwent very little change from his theology of the world to his early political theology. If anything, there is slightly increased emphasis on the need for action:

> Our relation to this future is markedly operative in character...any theory of this relationship is therefore a theory that is related to action: it is characterized by a new relationship between theory and practice.[215]

Metz insists that the future lies in human hands. It will, therefore, be built or destroyed through human activity. Metz did not, however, spell out what this action concretely involved for Christians. Besides a more committed intention of focusing on the actual situations of human oppression

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[213] Metz, Theology of the World, 55.

[214] Metz, Theology of the World, 89.

[215] Metz, Theology of the World, 147-148.

within the social context in which Christians live, Metz's eschatology in his early political theology was essentially the same as that of his earlier teaching in his theology of the world.

In his later writings there is a much more realistic approach to the idea of building the future kingdom of God on earth. With his teaching on the anthropology of domination and the history of human suffering, Metz draws attention to the limitations and restrictions facing the future of the world:

> Suffering stresses the contrast between nature and history, teleology and eschatology. There can be no "objective" reconciliation and no visible and manageable unity between them.[216]

He further tells us that

> Christianity is not an ideology of apathy in which all suffering is objectivized and regarded as capable of being removed. It is therefore opposed to all political and social utopias in which the history of suffering is unquestioningly identified with a history of oppression that can be abolished.[217]

Metz here maintains that no history of emancipation can provide meaning or complete solutions to the sufferings and deaths which have already taken place in history, and will inevitably continue to take place in the future.

This shift in focus does not negate what Metz earlier taught concerning the task of Christians to build and humanize the world, but his focus on the theme of "imminent expectation" (which we are about to discuss) was the direct result of his shift from a positive analysis of the modern history of freedom to a more realistic awareness of the present crisis facing the Church in the modern world:

> Times of crisis, when people suffer persecution and when injustice and inhumanity have reached massive proportions, inspire and drive forward the pious and devoted towards apocalyptic longing.[218]

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216 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 107.

217 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 142.

218 Metz, Followers of Christ, 80.

Imminent expectation of Christ's return is related both to the memory of human suffering and to the awareness of present sufferings throughout the world:

> We remember the future of our freedom in the memory of his [Jesus'] suffering--this is an eschatological statement that cannot be made more plausible through any subsequent accomodation, and cannot be generally verified.[219]

Metz is saying here that hope in the future kingdom of God is rooted in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Metz always speaks of Jesus' death as a victory and a promise of eternal life. In Metz's eschatology, hope in the future is integrally linked to the death and resurrection of Jesus. For this reason, the imminent expectation of the day of the Lord "does not allow the imitation of Christ to be postponed," but calls us to "display a practical solidarity with the least of the brethren."[220] Just as this solidarity emerges from the memory of suffering, so too does the memory of suffering give rise to a new vision of the future:

> What emerges from the memory of suffering is a knowledge of the future that does not point to an empty anticipation, but looks actively for human ways of life in the light of our experience of the new creation of man in Christ.[221]

As we can see, the theme of building and transforming the world is not discarded in Metz's later eschatology but given a new focus. Christians must still work towards a better world, but not

> as though subjects thought something out for themselves, had a definite aim in mind and looked for the means by which they would be able to realize this Utopia.[222]

What is now called for is that

> subjects <u>themselves</u> change in their practical anticipation of a utopia and that the Utopian imagination consequently also changes.[223]

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[219] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 111.

[220] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 176.

[221] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 112.

[222] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 81.

[223] Metz, <u>Faith in History and Society</u>, 81.

Here we notice a shift in focus from the transformation of the world to the transformation of the person.

If we are to grasp and appreciate the significance of this transition in Metz's eschatology we must realize that in his earlier theology of the world Metz believed that Christian engagement in humanizing the world would constitute an authentic "praxis" of imitating and following Christ.[224] Now the dialectical relationship between the Christian and the world has been reversed: Christians must first undergo a radical conversion vis-a-vis the memory of Christ's suffering, follow and imitate him in his solidarity with the poor and suffering, then involve themselves in a new praxis aimed at a vision of the future that cannot be comprehended or explained in categories of evolution. This sequence brings to mind the primary focus and direction of Metz's anthropological revolution as a "liberation from our consumerism". The move towards a transformation of personal lifestyle and social structures comes subsequently, although "immediately" following this personal conversion of the heart. This is why Metz tells us that

> Utopia cannot be depicted graphically and why it at the same time has to be conceived in an essentially practical way.[225]

This eschatology is situated within a historical and social context and, therefore, aims to be both morally and politically responsible. It is the exact opposite of bourgeois eschatology:

> Bourgeois eschatology bestows, unknown to itself, a testimony of political and moral innocence on the present time, reinforcing bourgeois society as it is, instead of driving it beyond itself,

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[224] In this respect, Metz's early political theology showed a distinct similarity to the political theology generated by the Catholic Restoration's stress on the primacy of the social over the individual. Being a reaction against the French Revolution in particular, and the Enlightenment in general, this conservative movement in the Catholic Church in Germany, France and Spain attempted to reconstruct society on the basis of religion. See Francis S. Fiorenza, "Political theology: a historical analysis," CTSA Proceedings, [vol.31, 1976], 326.

[225] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 81.

> according to the theme that everything will be all right in the end anyway, and all things will be reconciled.[226]

Unlike this bourgeois eschatology, an eschatology based on the imminent expectation of the second coming "does not paralyze responsibility but gives it a solid foundation."[227]

Given the present crisis in our technological world, Metz believes that eschatology should give birth to a new moral and political imagination "capable of being more than just a copy of already accepted political and economic strategies."[228] He tells us that "what we need in the long run is a new form of political life and new political structures."[229] Although he does not concretely elaborate on this new form of political life, he does say that "politics have now to take place in the universal arena of responsibility for everyone's life and survival,"[230] and that the connection between politics and morals

> requires the mobilization of spiritual and moral forces by means of a radical democratization of the social infrastructure, a nourishing from below of freedom and effective responsibility.[231]

As we shall see in the following section, Metz focuses on the institution of the Church rather than on society at large when he addresses the question of how such a "nourishing from below" is to take place.

Political Strategy and Pastoral Policy

In this section we will discuss Metz's practical suggestions on strategy, both in his earlier theology of the world and early political theology and in his most recent practical theory of a liberation process. Although the primary purpose is to show what Metz suggests for Christians and

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226 Metz, The Emergent Church, 4.

227 Metz, Followers of Christ, 80.

228 Metz, The Emergent Church, 10.

229 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 102.

230 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 103.

231 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 103-4.

Church members to consider, attention will also be drawn to the shift that has occurred as his theology has developed into a political, then practical fundamental theology.

Metz's practical reflections concerning the future of the Church in his theology of the world can be described with two words: optimistic and vague. Like his overall eschatology, his practical considerations were rooted in his secularization thesis and his teaching on how Christians are called to build and humanize the world. As pointed out in the preceding section, this whole approach to the future of the Church expresses a hope-filled optimism. Given the abstract nature of Metz's theology of the world, it comes as no surprise to discover the vagueness of his practical ideas on how Christians are to involve themselves in the world and actually effect a radical transformation of it.

At this early stage of theological development, Metz believed the proper stance of Christians regarding the future is hope:

> To remain true in every particular historical situation to an original historical event means to bestow upon this event in the present a future, to lay hold on the present itself as hope.[232]

Not a flight out of the world, but a flight with the world "forward" is the fundamental dynamism of the Christian hope in its renunciation of the world.[233] What does it mean to "bestow upon this event in the present a future", or to experience "a flight with the world forward"? Metz tells us that

> Christians must participate creatively and critically in social and political work for peace.[234]

Metz does not tell us how he believes that Christians are to "participate creatively", but gives almost exclusive attention to the Christian task of providing critique. He has virtually nothing to say concerning active involvement,

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[232] Metz, Theology of the World, 56.

[233] Metz, Theology of the World, 92.

[234] Metz, Theology of the World, 13. Emphasis mine.

beyond stating general maxims totally devoid of a context. For example, he says that "the Christian community must bring this 'tradition' of hope and love into our planned society,"[235] but nowhere does he spell out how this is to be accomplished. Despite what Metz says on an abstract level, what we actually find in his theology of the world and early political theology is that the task of building and hominizing the world is systematically delegated to non-Christians, with Christians participating only by offering critical suggestions or correctives wherever such are needed. Although Metz speaks time and time again of the political and social dimension of faith, it seems that the fear that Christianity will be reduced to an ideology is so strong at this stage in the development of his theology that he shies away from elaborating anything by way of social or political strategy. Again, what we find is an emphasis on critique:

> As a socially separate institution the Christian community can formulate its universal claim in a pluralistic society without ideology only if it presents it as criticism.[236]
>
> The Church's task is not the elaboration of a system of social doctrine, but of social criticism. The Church is a particular institution in society, yet presents a universal claim; if this claim is not to be an ideology, it can only be formulated and urged as criticism.[237]

Offering criticism is not only the task of Church officials, but also should be "supported more and more by a critical public opinion within the Church herself."[238] This is the task of the whole Christian community: not to get involved with politics directly, but only indirectly, by offering an adequate critique:

> It is at this point of the social and political dimension of planning for the future that the responsibility of the Christian indirectly begins: not by the Christian community itself again

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[235] Metz, Theology of the World, 155.

[236] Metz, Theology of the World, 154.

[237] Metz, Theology of the World, 123.

[238] Metz, Theology of the World, 121, 136.

> pressing towards political domination, but by its speaking from out of its Christian conscience on behalf of the future and making a liberating critique of the social and political reality in which these planning arrangements are set up.[239]

What we notice here is a focus on the overall structures of society, as well as on the Church's mission vis-a-vis this society. There is little or no mention of the structures of the Church, how the Church participates in society, or for that matter, how it is influenced by the symbolic and institutional structures of a wider society.

Metz only shifted his attention to the actual structures of the Church when he moved from a critique of the privatized religion of the Christian individual to a critique of bourgeois religion, or the "purely believed-in" religion of the middle-class. Consequently, his reflections on political, economic and social strategies became much more "praxis-centered", having both a new definable focus ("Church" rather than society) and a different context for the analysis of oppression (bourgeois religion).

Towards a Future Base-Community Church

We have seen how Metz emphasizes the concrete historical, social and sense-related character of grace in his later political theology. We have also drawn attention to the communitarian dimension of both conversion and the imitation of Christ. Furthermore, we have explored Metz's teaching on the three fundamental categories for a practical fundamental theology, highlighting how he believes that they form the practical structure for the life of the Christian community.

From this whole discussion emerges one central assertion: the Church must become a community Church, or a Church living in solidarity with others, especially those who are poor and suffer. This belief provides a new thrust for Metz's considerations on political strategies and pastoral policies:

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[239] Metz, Theology of the World, 152, 154.

> The Church will only become a Church in solidarity when it ceases to be a protectionist "Church for the people" and becomes a real "Church of the people".[240]

Metz calls for the formation of a future base-community Church. This new emphasis on the structures of the Church does not negate, but rather, merges with his earlier teaching regarding the need for the Church to provide a critique of society. There is also a new emphasis on the need for the Church to become self-critical in such a way as to bring about a radical transformation of Church life. Metz believes that a solid community lifestyle will provide a new foundation from which a critique of society can be launched. He seeks to "bring into organic unity a productive critique of both Church and society, aiming toward a basic community Church as 'Church of the people'."[241] This revolutionary move toward basic communities not only involves critique, but practical social and political strategy for the transformation of Church structures. Ultimately, Metz believes that the two following forces should meet and merge:

> the critique of society presented by the bishops, and the intentions of a basic community Church gradually developing among us.[242]

Metz seems to be saying that the teaching of the Church will only be able to offer an effective critique of society if the Church itself begins to reflect within its actual historical existence the actions and beliefs it proposes. Metz here singles out the social critique of the bishops and the prophetic move towards base-communities. This message is apparently addressed to Church officials.

Metz believes that the move towards basic communities is the only answer that presently exists for bourgeois religion. Such communities are the logical consequence of an effective anthropological revolution:

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240 Metz, Faith in History and Society, 231.

241 Metz, The Emergent Church, 86.

242 Metz, The Emergent Church, 91.

> perhaps there lies waiting in this increasingly obvious crisis of our Churches an opportunity for radical change in their understanding of parish community. Just as in the Latin American Church, the basic communities combine together prayer and political struggle, the Eucharist and work for liberation, so in our context basic communities could and should develop as the motive force and the manifestation of that anthropological revolution which is nourished by the power of the Eucharist.[243]

Metz openly admits that it is "out of these poor Churches [that] a reformational impulse seeks to come upon us all,"[244] but does not believe that "the traditional parish communities in the Church can be the main bearers of this reformational process."[245]

He is not here suggesting that the Church in Germany simply copy the basic communities as they are developing in the poor Churches of the third world, but he does insist that

> we will only arrive at this process of a second reformation among us when our main Churches themselves begin at last to take on a more diversified form at the grass-roots level.[246]

Although Metz is now addressing the present context of the German Church, he admits that his ideas concerning an anthropological revolution (that will eventually manifest itself in the emergence of grass-root communities) are only reflections of what <u>should</u> exist, not of what actually <u>does</u> exist:

> In our own situation, within German Catholicism, the post-bourgeois basic community Church scarcely exists at present, and its future is totally unknown.[247]

Elsewhere Metz confesses that his ideas on basic-communities for the future of the Church in Germany are still in the initial stages of development, and since his ideas are not matched by a presently existing process they remain

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243 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 46.

244 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 59.

245 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 62.

246 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 64. See also 45.

247 Metz, <u>The Emergent Church</u>, 87. See also Metz, "Base-Church and Bourgeois Religion," 204.

abstract:

> Of course in this form this [his ideas on basic communities] is more than abstract enough and is in need of theological elucidation as well as elucidation in terms of pastoral strategy.[248]

The same can be said concerning his teaching on the anthropological revolution:

> The bearers of this revolution are scarcely identifiable and its formulation in practical terms remains vague.[249]

If both the anthropological revolution and the formation of basic-communities are so essential for an authentic conversion and imitation praxis, then why is there no tangible sign of such a process taking place? Metz recognizes a number of difficulties and obstacles that presently stand in the way of this process. Before radical changes can occur, these obstacles must be dealt with or removed. Some of these he lists as

1. The present pope and episcopal hierarchies.
2. A "progressive" bourgeois liberal theology in Germany.
3. The institution of obligatory celibacy for priests.

Concerning the first point, Metz does not believe that Pope John Paul II is at all favourable to the idea of de-centralizing the power structure of the institutional Church by promoting and/or supporting (or perhaps even "allowing") the formation of grass-roots communities. According to Metz,

> His aim is to restore a basic Eurocentric orientation within the discipline and praxis of the universal Church.[250]

Neither does Metz believe that the present pope would consider easing the restrictions on obligatory celibacy; something he believes must happen before such communities could come into existence:

> I criticize the institution of obligatory celibacy because, in my opinion, it systematically prevents, among other things, the formation of future basic community Churches with a Eucharistic

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[248] Metz, Followers of Christ, 56.

[249] Metz, The Emergent Church, 42.

[250] Metz, The Emergent Church, 93.

center.[251]

Metz criticizes such regulations concerning who may, or may not, preside over the celebration of the Eucharist because he believes that

> the leader of such a basic community and the presider at their celebration of the Lord's Supper should be able to come forth out of that community itself.[252]

If these obstacles to a future basic community Church did not exist, what then would be the manner in which basic communities could come into existence? Metz holds that the Church must disaffiliate itself from the lifestyle and values of middle-class or bourgeois religion:

> Wherever our Churches make ~~greater~~ use of their powers of awareness and decision in order to withdraw from the provocation of being bourgeois religious institutions they open themselves to the future form of the Church as basic community.[253]

Here Metz indicates how the formation of basic communities cannot take place apart from an anthropological revolution. No amount of institutional restructuring will bring about the emergence of a basic community Church without a corresponding conversion of hearts:

> We should therefore overcome, at least within ourselves, that lack of repentance and self-criticism which we deplore in the Church, especially in regard to the Church hierarchy. In this way basic community emerges in the Church.[254]

In the final analysis, unless the people themselves undergo this radical conversion, a "change of hearts", then basic community will simply remain an idea:

> The fact is, a dependant people has to transform itself, and not just behave like a people being taken care of. This is how "basic community" emerges in the Church.[255]

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[251] Metz, The Emergent Church, 94.

[252] Metz, The Emergent Church, 65.

[253] Metz, The Emergent Church, 88.

[254] Metz, The Emergent Church, 83.

[255] Metz, The Emergent Church, 82; See also Metz, Faith in History and Society, 152.

We can see in gereral terms what Metz suggests must happen before basic communities can emerge in the Church. What practical suggestions does Metz offer for the actualization of this process? Again, Metz has little to offer. He does believe that the impetus for the move towards both an anthropological revolution and the formation of basic communities must come from the poor churches in the world. He tells us that this reformational impulse

> would in no way come upon us from out of Christian-Western Europe; instead it will come out of the liberation Christianity of the poor Churches of this world.[256]

Metz also believes that it is the religious orders who should pick up on this impulse and begin the process of radical conversion and change he has indicated must happen:

> Religious orders and communities have something like an innovatory function for the Church. They offer productive models for the Church as a whole in the business of growing accustomed to living in new social, economic, intellectual and cultural situations.[257]

He sees the religious orders as "a kind of shock therapy instituted by the Holy Spirit for the Church as a whole,"[258] and that it is their place and mission to "make people aware of the religious crisis within our Church."[259]

With his teaching on the need for a future base-community Church, Metz has provided a number of practical suggestions on the direction Christians in general--and officials in particular--should take. His call for a re-evaluation of the institution of obligatory celibacy as an obstacle to the emergence of such basic Christian communities, and his insistence on the need for a radical disaffiliation from the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie provide a decisively prophetic character to his theology. Nevertheless, since his ideas are still, by and large, only ideas of what should be, his

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256 Metz, The Emergent Church, 59.

257 Metz, Followers of Christ, 11.

258 Metz, Followers of Christ, 12.

259 Metz, Followers of Christ, 15.

theology remains at best, practically theoretical.

SUMMARY

In his most recent analysis of the present situation of the Church and the modern world Metz has focused on the dominating spirit of the middle-class. He points to the disastrous effects middle-class values have had on both the outer and inner nature of human beings. He believes that the freedom originating with the modern age (St. Thomas, Reformation, Enlightenment) has been assimilated and abused by the middle-class in their "praxis" of control and domination. In Metz's analysis it is the middle-class who control the systems and processes that comprise the modern world context.

The freedom attained in the secular emancipatory movements within the modern history of freedom has not been experienced by certain sectors of society. They have been unable to "come of age" through the attainment of political awareness. Not only are they oppressed, they are also blind to the fact of their subservience. This is largely because of the dominating and subjugating principles and policies of the middle class. Those who are not subjects in control lack identity as free subjects and are therefore in need of liberation from being oppressed.

Those Christians who are members of the bourgeoisie are in possession of a certain identity, but since it is an identity based on the need to dominate and exploit, they too are in need of being liberated. They are in need of being liberated from being oppressors.

The problems of a loss of subjective identity and the bourgeois appropriation of religion find a common solution in the radical praxis of imitating and following Christ. This praxis is based on the need for a radical change of heart which Metz terms an anthropological revolution. This call to conversion is articulated within the framework of

bourgeois religion, and consequently, is addressed to bourgeois Christians. It is a distinctively communitarian process that involves both mystical and political dimensions. It calls for disaffiliation from the way of life of the bourgeoisie, and suggests the emergence of radical grassroots communities. Such communities would not only provide an alternative to bourgeois religion, but would also provide the "locus" for the continuous imitation and following of Christ within a praxis of solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

Such communities would offer the possibility of liberation for both those who are members of the middle class as well as for those who suffer and are oppressed, who lack power, or have no real identity as historical subjects. Through the remembrance of the history of suffering--with the death and resurrection of Jesus central in this tradition--such Christians could regain their identity as free subjects before God.

To sum up Metz's approach in a sentence: The Church is called to be a people--the people of God--and in the context of developed capitalist countries such as Germany, the only way the Church can be true to the Gospel call to discipleship is if it becomes a Church of and for the people.

CHAPTER 3: LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION IN THE WRITINGS OF GREGORY BAUM

Gegory Baum is a prominent Canadian theologian currently teaching theology at St. Michael's college and Sociology at the University of Toronto.[260]

Over the last number of years Baum has published a considerable body of literature, most of which has taken the form of commentary on other contemporary Christian writings, especially ecclesiatical documents. Baum has gained much respect for his commentaries on Church documents and has done much to bring the message of political and liberation theology into Canadian consciousness.

Because he tells us that the major influences and events through which he has lived have profoundly affected his approach to interpreting and doing theology, it is important to first spell out these factors before dealing with the method and content of his teaching on liberation from oppression.

THEOLOGICAL METHOD: DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENT POSITION

Baum states that it is in the context of liberation and political theology that he understands his own theology.[261] This was not always the case. In order to appreciate Baum's

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260 Baum has recently accepted a position on the faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. His move to Montreal will take place some time prior to the Fall semester, 1986.

261 Baum, "Should Sin be Politicized?" The Ecumenist, [21:4, 1983], 54. Baum's theology is most definitely concerned with liberation, but it is not "liberation theology" as such. As he points out by way of commenting on the Detroit I Conference, 1975, "there was a common agreement that liberation theologies are not the product of single thinkers. They are reflections of communities involved in struggle." The Social Imperative, [New York: Paulist Press, 1979], 37. Although Baum's theology is properly defined as "political theology", he prefers to call it "Critical Theology," so as to avoid confusing it with the political theology that has had its origins in Germany.

present analysis of oppression and his formulation of a liberation process, it is important to recognize the major influences that have contributed to the development of his theology.

Whereas Metz speaks of stages in the development of his theology, where earlier positions were modified or developed, Baum prefers to speak of the major influences that have helped shape the character of his present theology. He believes that

> the style of theology acquired by theologians...is largely fashioned out of the methods that have guided them in the important turning points of their personal and intellectual history.[262]

Baum is obviously aware of the relation between the key events and experiences of one's personal life and theological interest and methodology. In an article for a book titled Journeys, he has spelled out the major events and influences that have shaped his present theological approach.

For the purposes of the present research it seems sufficient to speak of five major influences which comprise the most significant stages or "turning points" in Baum's theological approach. They are 1) The Ecumenical movement, 2) Jewish studies, 3) Therafields, 4) Blondelian Shift, and 5) Sociological studies. These influences will now be discussed in terms of the effect each has had on Baum's theological method.

Ecumenical Movement

Before the Second Vatican Council, Baum's approach to theological inquiry, like that of most North American Catholic theologians, was dominated by the neo-scholastic tradition of Europe. Theology was basically an attempt to protect the purity of this tradition in the face of

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[262] Baum, ed. Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience on Religious Thought. [New York: Paulist Press, 1975], 5. Baum provided the concept for this book and collected and edited the various articles received.

countervailing trends and belief systems.

After joining the Augustinian order in 1950, Baum was sent to Fribourg, Switzerland for his seminary studies, where he acquired his first formal theological training. He tells us that

> when I studied the great Thomistic synthesis in the early fifties, I was firmly convinced that I was acquiring the concepts and the method I would use in theological research and reflection for the rest of my life.[263]

This theological approach was founded on a particularly exclusivist understanding of Christianity. "Exclusivist" here refers to a view of the Church and the world as two separate domains. Although this understanding recognized that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, participation in the "mystical" body of Christ required formal membership in the Church.

When Baum returned to Canada, the inadequacy of this theology led him to search for new approaches. At this time he also became increasingly involved with the ecumenical movement.

Baum expressed a great deal of interest in Protestant thought from the beginning of his studies and was always concerned about how people look upon "the outsiders".[264] It is, therefore, easy to understand his involvement with this movement. One result was a dramatic shift in his approach to theological inquiry:

> The ecumenical movement convinced me that dialogue, personal involvement, and the subsequent transformation of consciousness were indispersible elements of the theological enterprise.[265]

The most significant of these aspects was dialogue. This new methodology became an intregal aspect of Baum's theological approach. As he puts it,

> dialogue as a theological method is applicable to the whole of theology and to any branch of

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[263] Baum, Journeys, 7.

[264] Baum, Journeys, 7-8.

[265] Baum, Journeys, 11.

knowledge.[266]

Baum considered dialogue to be the only way for theologians to remain open to new perspectives. The ecumenical movement convinced Baum that theology could only be done fruitfully if theologians were also engaged in non-academic activities involving dialogue and cooperation with other schools of thought or other groups, either secular or religious.

Jewish Studies

In the late fifties and early sixties Baum's ecumenical interest focused on the Jews. No doubt the fact that Baum was himself a Jew had some bearing on this interest.[267] In his work, Is the New Testament Anti-Jewish?, Baum relates how he detected a strong anti-Jewish trend in scripture and Christian theology that was otherwise hidden from non-critical exegesis. These studies had a decisive effect on his thinking:

> What my studies of Christian anti-Semitism taught me was that the dreadful things people do to one another are hidden from them.[268]

Baum here discovered the presence of ideology in theology. He became increasingly convinced that not only Christians, but "every community of men is subject to ideology-producing trends," and, consequently, that "every movement is in need of an ideological critique."[269] This need for an ongoing critique of social ideology radically affected Baum's manner or doing theology:

> Theologians must examine the possibility of false consciousness in themselves and the Christian community whose experience they interpret.[270]

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[266] Baum, Journeys, 10. See also, Baum, Man Becoming, 2.

[267] Baum was born of Jewish parents and raised in Berlin, Germany until the age of sixteen. Neither his parents nor Baum himself were in any sense practising Jews, and Baum appears to have had little or no interest in Jewish religion.

[268] Baum, Journeys, 16.

[269] Baum, Journeys, 17.

[270] Baum, Journeys, 19.

Although Baum was still heavily involved with the ecumenical movement during the Second Vatican Council,[271] he was becoming more and more disillusioned with the movement itself. In the first place, it appeared that the ecumenical movement was unable (unwilling?) to overcome the "exclusivist" stress of Barthian theology, a theological approach that Baum found increasingly difficult to accept. His pastoral experience during the late fifties led him to a deeper conviction that all human beings, regardless of religious affiliation, are subject essentially to the same dynamics of healing and destruction, life and death.

> During the late fifties I was involved in a good deal of pastoral ministry and came close to the lives of many people...the conviction grew in me at that time that there was not much difference between Christians and non-Christians.[272]

What Baum means by "not much difference between..." is that Christians and non-Christians alike encounter more or less the same "death-dealing" and "life-giving" experiences in the course of their day-to-day lives. Growth, healing, happiness, and love are not absent in "non-Christians".

Baum further came to believe that institutional interests dominated the whole ecumenical dialogue and that the earlier power of the movement had been greatly reduced.[273] There is little doubt that Baum's discovery of ideology contributed to an increased awareness of certain political interests in the Church as well as in the ecumenical movement itself.

Although Baum continues to have a great interest in ecumenical issues in general and the Jewish/Christian dialogue in particular, he slowly but surely shifted his priorities in the early and mid-sixties from the ecumenical movement to a community in Toronto known as Therafields.

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[271] It is interesting to note that Archbishop Philip Pocock asked Baum to be a "peritus" (an expert consultant in theological matters) at the Second Vatican Council. It comes as no surprise to discover that Baum was especially present as a consultant on ecumenical matters, and helped compose the document De Judaeis.

[272] Baum, Journeys, 21.

[273] Baum, Journeys, 10.

Therafields

Therafields was a small group movement that concentrated on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and psychic healing. A central dimension of this therapeutic group was the critique of human consciousness. Baum's first associations with this group occurred some time in 1964.

This movement was not simply a "school" for study, but aimed at experiencing greater liberation from alienation and false consciousness. Although Baum had already discovered the presence of ideology in theology and the effect it can have on the "political" order, it was only through his association with Therafields that he discovered the need for a therapeutic critique of theology as well:

> There are not only political ideologies that may taint Christian theology, there is also something that may be called personal ideology, i.e., ideas or mental trends that help persons to disguise their illness from themselves or to create an alternate, but illusory world for themselves.[274]

> My association with Therafields has taught me that there is not only a political but also a therapeutic critique of Christian doctrine.[275]

Baum's association with Therafields not only established the need for a therapeutic critique of the symbolic world of the human psyche, but also served to strengthen his belief in the essential "sameness" of Christians and non-Christians:

> The pathological trends that produce illness in persons and in society are universal. At the same time a man is not wholly delivered over to these forces: healing too is universal.[276]

Baum's association with Therafields convinced him that Christians and non-Christians experience the same destructive and healing forces in their lives. Here the primary means of healing is through dialogue and community.

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274 Baum, Journeys, 29.

275 Baum, Journeys, 29.

276 Baum, Journeys, 28. It is interesting to note that Baum here uses the word "healing" rather than "grace". At this earlier period Baum had not yet acquired a theological approach, or "system" able to give an orthodox theological presentation for the universality of grace.

This experiential proof for the universal existence of human sickness and healing, and the inability to reconcile these positions with the more or less exclusivist theology of the Church, led Baum to seriously consider whether he could remain a Catholic.

Blondelian Shift

Baum discovered the doctrine of the universality of grace, that is, the belief that God's life-giving presence is universally present within each human life and all of human history, at the Second Vatican Council. This new teaching provided the missing key for his theological method:

> I rejoiced in the ecclesiastical developments at the Vatican Council, on which the universalist trend, so brilliantly expounded and defended by Rahner, had considerable effect.[277]

This new approach gave Baum the foundation for a an entire theological system:

> There was not a single topic that remained unaffected by this new perspective.[278]

In 1968 Baum published a work titled The Credibility of the Church Today, in which he adopted this perspective and interpreted the Church and its teaching in its light.[279] In 1969 Baum published another work titled, Faith and Doctrine, in which he worked out the implications of this new approach for Christian apologetics. Baum had begun a book prior to both of these two works but had set it aside while working on them. It is in this third book, Man Becoming, that the major discoveries which he had made over the years were presented as a unified theological system.

Dialogue and community continue to play a key role in Baum's theological anthropology, but in Man Becoming he not only speaks of human healing in terms of human psychology,

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[277] Baum, Gregory. Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience. [New York: The Seabury Press, 1970]. xi.

[278] Baum, Journeys, 23.

[279] Baum, Gregory. The Credibility of the Church Today. [New York: Herder and Herder, 1968].

but also speaks of psychotherapeutic healing in terms of divine grace. This new element was only made possible through the teaching introduced at Vatican II.[280] In Man Becoming we see all the elements of Baum's theological approach. There is a dialogical understanding of human nature, an awareness of both personal and social ideology in theology, a conviction of the universality of grace, and the vision of a two-fold task for theology: the critique of both the political and personal orders of reality.

Although Baum was aware of the need for both an analysis of political ideology as well as personal psyche, still, at this time he focused primarily on the personal dimension of liberation by providing a phenomenological analysis of personal growth. He believed that such an approach would help to discern transcendence in the midst of human life. "Transcendence" here refers to the active divine presence in human life and history which makes healing and human liberation possible.

Baum does give some attention to the social dimension of oppression in Man Becoming, but the focus was primarily on the ideological and symbolic dimensions, not the institutional. The shift from a critique of the symbolic order to an increased focus on the institutional order was already established in Baum's theology when Man Becoming was published, but was only articulated in subsequent publications.

Sociological Studies

> The social impact of religion became a special area of interest in my life...from 1969 to 1971, I studied sociology at the New School for Social Research in New York City, and from that time on my theological research and reflection have focused on the social dimension of the Gospel and the Christian Church, including the ideological

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[280] Baum initially discovered the "universalist" trend at the Second Vatican Council, primarily thanks to Rahner, but later came to discover the origin of this theological approach in the writings of Maurice Blondel. It is for this reason that he speaks of this approach as the "Blondelian Shift".

and radical components.[281]

After this two year period of sociological studies, Baum began to focus a great deal more on social institutions and the alienation and oppression they produce. He had already extended his perspective from "Christians" in particular to "human beings" in general. Now he extends his perspective from an ideological critique of theology and Church teaching to a critique of secular institutions as well.

> With political theolcgy and liberation theology, I hold that one of the principal tasks of contemporary theology is to "deprivatize" the Christian message. In the past, we tended to read the Gospel as if it were addressed simply to individuals while it was in fact addressed to persons and their scciety. Today it has become necessary to recover the social dimension.[282]

We have drawn attention to the major events and influences on Baum's theology, highlighting the principal effect each has had on his theology. The way in which Baum has created a synthesis of these elements continues to define his theological method.

Present Theological Method: Critical Theology

We have drawn attention tc how Baum's ecumenical and Jewish studies convinced him of the need for a critique of ideology in theology. This method was soon extended to include a critique of society itself. Baum tells us, in Man Becoming, that the critique of human life is not simply a dimension or branch of Christian theology, but is essential to authentic theological investigation:

> the task of the theclcgian is to show how the Gospel ties in with human life, how on the one hand it offers a critique of human life and thus manifests its transcendence, and how on the other hand it transforms human life and thus demonstrates its relevance.[283]

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[281] Baum, Journeys, 21.

[282] Baum, "The debate on Social Sin Continues," The Ecumenist, 24.

[283] Baum, Man Becoming, 9.

A "critique" of human life means the analysis of structural evil in institutions that affect the day-to-day lives of people. It is within the actual historical and social life of human beings that God makes available his redemptive and liberating grace.

> The assessment of evil powers which oppress people in their concrete situation is...an essential part of theology, for without it the meaning of divine revelation cannot be grasped.[284]

How does Baum define critical theology? At one point he tells us that it is

> the critical application of the various theories of alienation to the self-understanding in faith of the Christian Church.[285]

Critical theology is not concerned with personal virtue, but examines "the structural consequences of doctrine or institution...."[286] In this way critical theology brings about a "raising of consciousness,"[287] by exposing the hidden political implications of religious language and practice, thereby enabling the Church to assume theological responsibility for its social reality. The perspective for doing critical theology must be an identification with the poor and oppressed by means of an ongoing commitment to a process of liberation:

> Critical theology can only be created by reflecting Christians who identify with the historical movements from servitude to liberation taking place in their society."[288]

If the task of critical theology is to uncover the social dimension of sin in society, then theology obviously needs the social sciences. Theologians must have a theory of what constitutes social reality, as well as a set of analytical tools to carry out effective social analysis.

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[284] Baum, The Social Imperative, [New York: Paulist Press, 1979], 10.

[285] Baum, Religion and Alienation, [New York: Paulist Press, 1975], 194.

[286] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 196.

[287] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 214.

[288] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 221.

> If theologians want to develop a critical theology for North America they will have to turn to social studies to clarify the structure of evil on this continent.[289]

Let us now examine the various dimensions of Baum's analytical method.

METHOD FOR THE ANALYSIS OF OPPRESSION

In this section the overall method for Baum's analysis of oppression will be outlined and developed through treating the following four areas:

1. Social theory: the dialectical nature of oppression.
2. Sociological method.
3. Analytical perspective.
4. Analytical scope.

Dialectical Nature of Social Oppression

Baum believes that society is constructed by a dialectical process involving the symbolic and the institutional orders.[290] Despite the fact that human beings have constructed the social institutions that constitute their collective life, these institutions maintain themselves by means of an inner logic. According to Baum, public values are determined by the logic of these institutions, especially the values and principles of the economic system.[291] Since Baum's view of society is dialectical, his understanding and analysis of oppression will be dialectical

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289 Baum, The Social Imperative, 125. After attending a two-day conference in Saskatoon in 1977, Baum published a short summary and commentary on the various presentations that were given. His strongest criticism focused on the lack of social analysis in the addresses: "No one tried to analyze the social and economic reality of Canadian society which is after all the context in which Canadian Christians do their theology"; "Political Theology", The Ecumenist, [15:3, 1977], 43. See also, The Social Imperative, 2, where Baum states that "the turn to sociology is inevitable."

290 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation: A Socio-Theological Approach," taken from Donald Evans Faith, Authenticity, and Morality, [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980], 157.

291 Baum, "Values and Society," The Ecumenist, [vol.17, Jan., 1979], 26.

as well.

What does Baum intend by the use of the term "dialectical"? Dialectical relationships, according to Baum, are ongoing interactions that occur between conflicting or opposing dimensions of life. The personal and social, for example, are dimensions of life that can never be reduced one to the other. They must co-exist, with a certain degree of harmony and tension. The attempt to synthesize these two poles reveals the conflicts, tensions, or contradictions that exist between them at a given time, and thereby makes it possible first to identify, and then work to resolve existing conflicts and contradictions.

Baum's analysis of social sin led him to adopt a fundamental principle concerning the social dimension of human life: "The institutions to which we belong create a certain kind of consciousness in us".[292] Baum is not a social determinist, however, for he also believes that "there are indeed moments in history when consciousness in turn affects the structures of society."[293]

Where the structures of society reflect various levels and degrees of class and status, Baum believes that the social consciousness they generate tends to protect the interests of the privileged:

> Much of what passes as philosophy, as cultural values, or as religious ideals are subtly disguised ways of protecting a privileged institution against others and of making it easier for the ruling class to retain its power.[294]

This is not to suggest that members of the ruling class are consciously manipulating the rest of society, although at times this may be the case. More fundamentaly, it is the logic inherent in social institutions themselves that produces the public values and ideals by which we live:

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[292] Baum, The Social Imperative, 101.

[293] Baum, The Social Imperative, 101. Baum was influenced in this area by the writings of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim.

[294] Baum, Man Becoming, 107.

> We have built the various institutional and ideological prisons, possibly with the best of intentions, which are the historical sources of our own alienation.[295]

Just as the young Hegel found the source of alienation in the symbols that dominate the human imagination, and the young Marx attributed alienation primarily to the injustices and discrepancies in society, Baum holds

> that the oppression from which people suffer is imposed on them through the interaction of the symbolic and institutional orders.[296]

From this dialectical understanding of social life Baum came to believe that theology must engage in a two-fold analysis: 1) the analysis of personal psyche, both concious and unconcious, as well as 2) the analysis of the actual institutional life of society, both in the institutional structures themselves and in the public values and ideals they generate to form social consciousness. Baum includes "spiritual trends" under the umbrella of social consciousness as well:

> Any study of modern Christian spiritual trends and of the so-called new religions must be accompanied by a sober analysis of the conditions of modern life and the various "ethoses" or visions of life that characterize contemporary society.[297]

Sociological Method

Baum does not see sociology as a unified science but prefers to speak of it as a "conflictual grouping...of various fields of interest and methodological approaches, all dealing with society as a human project."[298] The particular methodological approach that Baum follows is termed "critical." According to Baum, critical sociologists are

> sociologists who do not regard society as a social equilibrium. On the contrary they hold that there are in society discrepancies and injustices that inflict hardships on people and diminish their humanity. A healthy society, according to the

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295 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 149.

296 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 139-140.

297 Baum, The Social Imperative, 130.

298 Baum, "Sociology and Theology," 22.

> critical sociologists, is a conflictual one, one in which ongoing conflicts between various groups bring to the surface the hidden contradictions and thus lead people to reconstitute their social life.[299]

As a critical theologian, Baum believes that every social critique is founded on some type of social theory, and that implicit in this theory is a philosophical or religious world view that includes a set of values.[300] There is always a subjective element in social analysis because the consciousness of the sociologist is grounded in the consciousness of society. In other words, the values and ideas of public life form, to a degree, the values and ideas of the sociologist:

> For if consciousness is created by society, then the ideas people have reflect the common institutions and the socio-political conditions in which they live.[301]

Not only is there no "value-free" study of society, but neither is there any value-free study of historical documents. On the latter issue, Baum has been influenced by the writings of Maurice Blondel, especially his essay "History and Dogma," which is a reaction against historicism.[302] Blondel defined historicism as an approach to the study of historical documents that presupposed, either explicitly or implicitly, a purely scientific or "objective" interpretation of the text.

Baum is convinced that social research is always and inevitably based on a set of values and on a vision of what life should be like. He also believes that this subjective side of social analysis should be made explicit. Baum not only makes his values known, but also demonstrates how they contribute to the liberation process. They contribute in a two-fold way: on the one hand eschatological symbols and values provide the measure by which Christians critique

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299 Baum, "Sociology and Theology," 22.

300 Baum, "Sociology and Theology," 28.

301 The Social Imperative, 115.

302 Baum, Man Becoming, 10.

society, and on the other hand they provide Christians with an alternate vision of society. According to Baum, "the promised realm of justice and peace is the measure by which Christians evaluate and judge present society."[303] We will consider the content of Baum's eschatology in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Analytical perspective: Option for the poor

If consciousness is primarily determined by the dominant symbols of institutional life, and if research is based on certain subjective values and beliefs, it would seem that no sociological method or perspectival stance could provide an infallible or "complete" analysis of society. Given the limits of what humans can know and the complexity of human social life, it is easy to see why Baum believes that both a political and a therapeutic critique of theology and Church teaching are required in order to uncover the traces of ideology and personal bias that exist, to some degree, in every social analysis.

In order to minimize distortions in social analysis, it is crucial to spell out the relation of social perspective and ideology. We have pointed out why Baum does not believe there is any possibility of providing a purely "scientific" analysis of society. He believes, however, that personal involvement with society provides the best guarantee of reaching a reasonably correct analysis of oppression. As noted earlier, Baum's involvement with the ecumenical movement convinced him that theologians must be engaged in active dialogue with other groups and perspectives if their theological reflection is to be fruitful. Baum later extended this idea to an epistemology based on the option for the poor. According to Baum, the easiest way to detect injustice and ideology in society is to adopt the perspective of the poor and oppressed through an

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[303] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 284.

identification with their struggles for justice and liberation:

> If we look at society from the viewpoint of its victims, we quickly recognize the sinful dimensions in it.[304]

For Baum, any truly humanitarian or Christian social analysis must be based on an identification with the poor and oppressed. This identification necessarily involves an ongoing commitment to a process of liberation.

What is the option for the Poor? According to Baum, the option for the poor involves two dimensions: one perspectival and the other activist.

> The option is first a bias: it expresses the willingness to look at one's world from the viewpoint of the people at the bottom and in the margin. Secondly, the option expresses solidarity: it offers public witness of solidarity with the poor.[305]

Defining it from a methodclogical point of view, Baum states that

> the option is a "praxis": it begins with commitment, which in turn affects how reality is perceived, which in turn leads to further action, and so forth, the entire interaction aiming at the liberation of people from oppression.[306]

Baum makes it clear that a commitment of solidarity must precede reflections and strategies for liberation:

> Only through solidarity with the victims do we gain a truthful understanding of society, and only then can we initiate a process destined to overcome the injustice inflicted on people.[307]

It is only through commitment to the struggles of the poor that the structures of sin in society can be detected. Identification with the poor has a distinctively epistemological dimension. Baum points out how this epistemological dimension of a commitment to human

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304 Baum, "Should Sin be Politized?" The Ecumenist, 57.

305 Baum, "Political Theology in Conflict," The Ecumenist, [22:6, 1984], 85.

306 Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, [Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1984], 41-42. Emphasis mine. The second dimension of praxis will be considered in a later section of this chapter.

307 Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics. 44.

liberation has been recognized and adopted by certain sociologists as well as theologians:

> Some sociologists insist that the best angle for discovering the truth about society is accessible to researchers only through a commitment to human emancipation.[308]

Analytical Scope

Baum believes not only that social analysis must be done from the perpective of the poor, but also that its scope must extend to Global proportions. The reason for this lies in the complex nature of oppression. The various forms of oppression are interstructured within a given society. They are also inter-related with oppressive structures in other countries as well. This is especially true for economic structures:

> When North American thinkers analyze the ills and injustices in their own countries, they should not confine their view to the conditions at home but take into consideration the total picture, the economically interconnected world. Any analysis of the oppressive trends in society must be "holistic".[309]

On its own terms, Baum believes that liberation theology in North America would make sense only if it were based on an analysis of the complex reality of [North]-American society and its relation to the rest of the world.[310]

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[308] Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 150.

[309] Baum, The Social Imperative, 11. Baum is consistent with the methodological approach of critical sociologists, for as he points out in another article, "critical sociologists...are unable to concentrate on micro-problems: for the critical study of a limited area immediately raises wider issues and inevitably leads to an examination of the contraditions implicit in the whole system." ["Sociology and Theology", 27].

[310] Baum, The Social Imperative, 106.

FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS

In his analysis of oppression Baum is interested in uncovering both the institutional injustices in Church and society as well as those ideological symbols that legitimize the actual structures of oppression. Here we can see the two sides of Baum's understanding of oppression: the institutional and the symbolic. Although he has never presented a systematic analysis of any particular society, including that of Canada, he has recorded numerous aspects of his analysis throughout his writings.

He tells us that "the analysis of social sin in North America will inevitably be complex."[311] He identifies a number of interconnected trends that constitute the structures of domination in North America and thereby contribute to oppression. He lists some of these as 1) institutionalized racism, 2) the growing immobility of bureaucratic centralization, 3) the devastation of natural resources through industrial expansion, 4) the exclusion of women from public life.[312]

Among these various institutionalized trends of oppression Baum believes that the present economic system, in which free enterprise is exercised only on the highest level, is quite possibly the most significant factor in an analysis of social oppression.[313] In Latin America, he believes, all institutional trends contributing to oppression and injustice "are completely subordinated to the economic system and hence cannot be examined at all apart from the class struggle...,"[314] However, in North America, "it is not at all clear whether there is a single dominant form of oppression to which all others are subordinated."[315]

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311 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 219.

312 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 216.

313 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 221-222.

314 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 216.

315 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 216.

As he points out by way of commenting on the Detroit I Conference 1975,

> the participants agreed that there were several forms of oppression, especially those of class, race and sex, and that these are always interstructured in ways that are historically different in different societies.[316]

We can see why Baum believes that social analysis of structural oppression in North America will be complex. Although he does not provide us with more than passing reflections on the oppression of women or the marginalization of ethnic groups, he does present a comprehensive analysis of economic structures. The various aspects of this understanding of oppression will now be discussed in relation to the following three perspectives:

1. Capitalism
2. The poor and oppressed in the Canadian context.
3. The structures and symbols of oppression in the Church.

Oppression in the System of Capitalism

Baum has very little that is good to say about the present economic system in North America:

> The present system produces an unequal distribution of wealth in Canada, widens the gap between the rich and poor nations of the world, and assigns the control of natural resources to an ever smaller group of people. These are the dimensions of social sin in Canada.[317]

This unequal distribution of wealth, and the concentration of power that accompanies this wealth, have resulted from the "freedom of the market." As Baum puts it,

> the freedom of the market protects the power of the rich, the resourceful and the clever, and allows them to triumph over the poor, the modest and the simple.[318]

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[316] Baum, The Social Imperative, 34.

[317] Baum, "Attack on the New Social Gospel," The Ecumenist, [17:6, 1979], 101.

[318] Baum, The Priority of Labor, [New York: Paulist Press, 1982], 32.

What determines success in the market place is the drive for an ever greater maximization of profits. This highly competitive principle determines all production, even that of food.[319] Since the whole system of capitalism is based on the competitive struggle for increased profit margins, it is not surprising that businesses have grown into corporations, and corporations into transnational conglomerates. Baum draws our attention to the international dimension of capitalism:

> Since monopoly capitalism has led to the creation of giant corporations that exceed the boundaries of any one nation, there is no government left that can control them at this time.[320]

Capitalism not only creates institutional injustices such as material poverty and the exploitation of natural resources for the sole sake of production and profit, capitalism also creates

> a materialistic culture, an achievement-and pleasure-oriented business civilization that estranges people from the substance of their humanity.[321]

The ideological values and ideals that constitute this culture are generated by the logic inherent in Capitalism.

With the growth of Capitalism came a corresponding change in the self-understanding of those belonging to, and participating in, the capitalist system.

> For a while people may nourish their ideals of life from great religious tradition, but by participating in economic life, they acquire a new self-understanding, and, even without realizing it, they are transformed in accordance with the public ideals of profit and competition.[322]

Here we see Baum's view of how society creates consciousness in its members through public ideals that are constitutive elements of the economic system of capitalism:

> in the present economic system we are constantly bombarded with two contradictory messages, to be dedicated and efficient workers and, after 5

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319 Baum, "Values and Society," 26.

320 Baum, The Social Imperative, 229.

321 Baum, "Attack on the New Social Gospel," 81.

322 Baum, "Values and Society," 27.

> o'clock in the afternoon, to be consumers and swingers spending money and using up market commodities. The present economic system assigns us two exhausting tasks that tear at us and produce anxiety.[323]

These two "ethoses" of work and consumption are directly linked to the economic system of late capitalism. What counts in the "work" ethos is dedication, personal responsibility, hard work, the rational organization of one's private life, the careful restriction of emotions, in summary, anything that contributes to an increase in efficient production. Whatever impedes production is either suppressed, downplayed or belittled.

Because

> the vast majority of people in our society have tedious work. And because work is boring, devoid of creativity and imagination, people dream more intensely of their leisure time, after five o'clock, on the weekend, and above all on the brief vacation once a year.[324]

Given such conditions in the workplace, it is easy for the consumer ethos to lure and entice people with promises of pleasure, relaxation, and fulfillment. What they usually get, however, are debts and more anxieties:

> A certain social pressure, the expectation of other people, and a subtle blackmail exercised by society makes us into ever eager customers; we buy more things than we really need, we spend money we cannot afford, and we often find ourselves in debt.[325]

It is easy to see why Baum refers to the consumer ethos as "expensive hedonism". The fast-paced world of hard work and exaggerated consumption too often proves to be more than the average human being can endure:

> Some people become troubled by headaches and they begin to use tranquilizers and medicines of various kinds to keep up the pace. While these irritations lay the foundation for a large drug market useful for the expanding company, they often have debilitating consequences for personal life.[326]

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[323] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 150.

[324] Baum, The Social Imperative, 133.

[325] Baum, The Social Imperative, 133.

[326] Baum, The Social Imperative, 134.

These conflicting (yet somehow manageably compatible) messages of production and consumption not only produce inner turmoil, they also break the bonds that create community by producing a highly privatized understanding of life:

> We become concerned with promoting our own career; we think of our own advantage; we regard other people, if they are not related to us, as competitors, remain aloof from them, even suspicious, and seek a life that involves us as little as possible with the community at large.[327]

One of the most noticeable characteristics of modern capitalism is the growing unemployment rate. Baum does not explore the structural reasons for this trend, but suggests that technological advancement is one contributing factor. Where business can increase profits through the use of technology, the resulting loss of jobs has little deterrence on the trend that sees human beings being replaced by machines. In the face of widespread unemployment, the particular "work ethos" generated by the structures of capitalism tends to obscure the true causes for this crisis. As Baum notes,

> Some people blame women for unemployment: they should stay at home instead of taking jobs away from men. Others blame the immigrants especially the visible minorities: they are taking the jobs of Canadians. These false attributions of blame have dangerous social consequences. They legitimize class oppression, sexism and racism.[328]

Blindness to the structural causes of oppression further contributes to oppression by protecting the system from the criticism it deserves, thus ensuring the continuation of injustice. Corporations tend to hide behind a good public image that they themselves generate: an image which usually takes the form of social responsibility. They create the general feeling of existing for the good of society. As Baum points out, this is not necessarily so:

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[327] Baum, "Values and Society," 27.

[328] Gregory Baum & Duncan Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 37. See also 64.

> Since in democratic societies the large economic corporations must seek the support of public opinion they have become concerned with their image and try to spell out their policy in terms of social responsibility. Still the market has a logic of its own, which kind words do not alter.[329]

The welfare State is itself a legitimization of structural economic injustice:

> Because ever larger sectors of the populatien are being excluded from economic well-being and pushed into poverty, the ccrporations increasingly rely on governments to pacify the population and protect their empires.[330]

For Baum, the various trends of institutional oppression in Canada are inter-related:

> The structures of domination in North America undoubtedly include the injustices implicit in the economic system, but they also include other significant factors as independent variables.[331]

The blame for unemployment is often placed on women or racial minorities, which tends to foster class oppression, sexism, and racism. These trends may likewise be evident in our educational and political institutions as well.

> The very institutions in which we live, political, economic and educational, make normative the dominant culture in the schools and tend to make children who come from different ethnic or racial backgrounds feel inferior.[332]

As we can see, Baum does not place the source of all oppressive trends in the economic order. He does believe, however, that the structures of capitalism are largely responsible for most of the alienation and oppression in society.

We can see the principal aspects of Baum's analysis of the North American-Canadian context, but this is primarily an analysis of the whole. What of the parts? As Baum notes, "class and status, not just class, must be analyzed to understand the power structures in society."[333] Baum draws

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329 Baum, "Values and Society," 27.

330 Baum, "Values and Society," 55.

331 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 216.

332 Baum, "Multiculturalism in Canada," The Ecumenist, [16:1, 1977], 10.

our attention to the three basic class divisions in Canada: the lower classes, the middle class and the elite. This division is helpful in clarifying Baum's approach to identifying the poor and oppressed in Canada. This task is a necessary part of any social analysis interested in liberation from oppression. As Baum points out while reflecting on the recent encyclical "Laborem Exercens":

> Since the encyclical has "dereified" the notion of class conflict, recovered its concrete historical context, and redefined it in terms of the freely endorsed solidarity of the oppressed in the struggle for justice it is necessary in each country and each situation to clarify who are "the poor," the oppressed, the people who must stand together in solidarity.[334]

Elsewhere Baum states that,

> If faith includes God's bias for the poor, then it is impossible to speak of sin, conversion and new life without naming the victims of society and analyzing the structures of oppression.[335]

These classes will now be individually treated.

The Poor and Oppressed in Canada

Before examining Baum's analysis of who constitute the poor in Canada, it is important to situate this endeavor properly within the context of his understanding and analysis of Canadian society. As we recall, Baum holds that society is constructed by a dialectical process involving both the institutional and symbolic orders. He believes that institutions create a certain kind of consciousness in people. In terms of the Canadian context, this conscicusness is primarily determined by the economic system of capitalism. With the two "ethoses" of production and consumption, Canadian citizens, regardless of their class or status, tend to define themselves against the public values of career achievement, financial success, and the ability to partake of society's commodities. This is the context in

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[333] Baum, The Social Imperative, 38.

[334] The Priority of Labor, 39.

[335] Baum, "Political Theology in Conflict," The Ecumenist, [22:6, 1984], 86.

which Baum speaks of the poor and oppressed in Canada.

In presenting Baum's view of who constitute the poor and oppressed in Canada, each of the previously mentioned classes will be treated separately, starting with the lower classes.

The Economically or Materially Poor.

When Baum speaks of "the poor," he is speaking of those groups in society that experience a lack of material wealth. When he speaks of "poverty," he is talking about the kind of poverty produced by economic forces that can be studied and analyzed.[336] The poor belong to the lower classes of people in Canada, and are either unemployed or suffer from an insufficient wage or income. Whereas in the nineteenth century the poor were mainly the industrial workers, the boundaries of the poor have been extended to include other significant sectors of society as well:

> A critical analysis shows that "the poor" are constituted by sectors of the population that also include agricultural workers, workers belonging to socially despised races or ethnic groups, and working women.[337]

Those who are poor not only suffer from a lack of material wealth, but are dehumanized as well. As Baum notes, "real poverty is characterized by two painful traits: insecurity and social disgrace."[338] The insecurity results from being at the mercy of a harsh and highly competitive workplace. The social disgrace results from the inability to achieve and succeed in an achievement-oriented society. This is especially true for the unemployed, for whom insecurity and social disgrace are magnified. As Baum sees it, they are first of all denied the right to work:

> In the welfare state the unemployed are allowed to participate in society through consumption, while it is their human vocation to participate in

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[336] Baum, "Blessed are the Poor," The Ecumenist, [16:6, 1978], 87.

[337] Baum, The Priority of Labor, 39.

[338] Baum, "Should Sin be Politized?" 89.

society also through production.[339]

Even the ability to participate in society as consumers is denied or greatly inhibited, a fact that often leads to crime:

> Some people who have been successfully persuaded by society that to have things is the purpose of human life, and yet are cut off from financial resources, may become cheaters and thieves indeed by free choice, and then the society which has manipulated their imagination sits in judgment over them.[340]

Elsewhere Baum refers to criminals and social outcasts as "the shadowy underside of an achievement-oriented society which destroys those who cannot or will not succeed...."[341]

Baum sees the poor as those who are "denied" a number of basic human rights because they are either being insufficiently paid for their labor, if they have jobs, or because they they are simply unable to find work at all. Poverty here refers to material or financial poverty, but also to the dehumanization and alienation that result from participating in the "ethoses" of society through the interaction of the personal psyche and social consciousness.

The Anxious Middle Class. Although middle-class workers in Canada may not experience real poverty in the sense of economic misfortune, they are, nonetheless, oppressed by the same public values that oppress the poor. The consequences of this oppression are often severe:

> Even the middle classes, it seems to me, are exposed to social tensions that produce mental sickness and psychological conflicts.[342]

In fact,

> research has shown (Richard Sennett) that dissatisfaction with life and moods of depression get worse as people climb on the social scale, for as they move upward it becomes increasingly difficult to triumph over their peers.[343]

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[339] Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 87.

[340] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 205.

[341] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 205.

[342] Baum, "Theology Questions Psychiatry: An Address," The Ecumenist, [May-June, 1982], 58.

This pressure increases when the unemployment rate rises. Even in institutions serving the public such as teaching and social work, ministry, community organization, communications and the arts, etc..., during periods of high unemployment such salaried men and women, who are largely protected from the pressures that characterize the world of production and business, become anxious about losing their job security which inevitably makes them more cautious toward their fellows, and more competitive.[344] Middle-class workers in Canada may enjoy a more comfortable standard of living than the poor, but

> their habits of life are still inspired by the inherited Protestant ethic and demand hard work to the point of exhaustion, while the conditions of contemporary capitalism call for high consumption and invite the middle classes to become consumers of goods and of expensive pleasures. They work hard and are constantly out of breath; at the same time they feel that they owe it to themselves to be involved in leisure activities and who knows what else.[345]

The Economic Elite. The elite class in Canada also suffer from the same social consciousness as the rest of society. By setting themselves over others through the exercise of economic wealth and power, they have defined their self-understanding in terms of wealth and power, rather than in terms of the well-being of all humanity. For this reason, Baum believes that "the masters, too, are estranged from their true humanity,"[346] Although they have succeeded in matching the demands placed upon them by society, in doing so they have estranged themselves from the rest of humanity, especially the poor who suffer on their account. Baum points to Hegel's master/slave dialectical model as a means to understanding the alienation and dehumanization experienced by the elite class.

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[343] Baum, "Theology Questions Psychiatry," 58.

[344] Baum, The Social Imperative, 136.

[345] Baum, "Theology Questions Psychiatry: An Address," 58.

[346] Baum, The Social Imperative, 140.

> Oppression damages the oppressed but also harms the oppressors. The misfortune of the subjugated becomes the misfortune of the whole society.[347]

As we can see, the analysis of poverty and oppression in Canada is indeed complex. For example, we notice that Baum mentions women and racial minorities as sectors of the poor. These same groups are also the victims of oppression from other institutions besides the economic. There is an interplay between oppressive trends in various institutions. Although the social causes for poverty can be identified by means of an analysis of the economic order, this will only tell us <u>who</u> the poor are. It does not tell us <u>why</u> the poor happen to be ethnic groups and working women. Baum is well aware of this difficulty in analyzing oppression.

<u>Analysis of the Institutional Church</u>

Baum believes that the purpose of critical sociology is to uncover the oppressive and alienating trends in social institutions. He similarly believes that the purpose of critical theology is to expose these same trends in the institution of the Church. In a sense, there is no real difference in these methodological approaches. Baum makes mention of four defensive ideologies that protect the existing structures of the Church. By no means does he take credit for discovering these ideologies, but openly admits that

> Christians have begun to discover the defensive ideologies which they have inherited and which have made the Christian religion a source of oppression in the world.[348]

The first of these is the "anti-Jewish" ideology. This ideology "has made us glorify the Christian religion by strongly negating Jewish existence...."[349] It produces a mind-set in which Jews symbolize the blind, stubborn,

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[347] Baum and Cameron, <u>Ethics and Economics</u>, 44.

[348] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 165.

[349] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 165.

unredeemed section of mankind.

The second ideology is the "anti-feminist" position. According to Baum, the Churches have affirmed the superiority of men over women and have protected the power of men as the decision-makers in the world, assigning to women at best the place of helper and associate.

The third ideological trend in the Church is a certain anti-pluralist monopolist world-view. This ideology saw

> the so-called Christian nations, i.e., the white and developed countries at the center of history and looked upon the other cultures and races as destined to be taught by Western history and to contribute to its success.[350]

Here Jesus served as a symbol of separation and victory over others.

The fourth ideology is reflected in the authoritarian political structure of the Catholic Church institution. This monarchial understanding of Church holds it proper that "the pope rule the entire Church, the bishop his diocese, the pastor his parish, and the husband his family."[351] This ideology is obviously inter-related with the anti-feminist ideology, for as Baum notes, it is a male-dominated authoritarianism. Baum believes that this tradition "creates a significant obstacle to the humanization and liberation of humankind."[352] This fateful "authoritarian" imagination also has detrimental psychic consequences. It tends to result in a divided self-understanding:

> We begin to imagine ourselves as divided into a lower part, including body, feelings, and sexuality, and a higher part, rationality, which is destined to rule the irrational components.[353]

This view of the self not only creates "compulsions, distortions, violence and endless guilt feelings," but also "leads to authoritarianism in the psychic and political

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350 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 165.

351 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 166.

352 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 169.

353 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 168.

order and generates an imagination of law and order."[354] In this way such an ideology not only protects the present structure of the Church, but legitimizes authoritarianism in other social institutions as well. This "authoritarian" view of life serves to protect powerful institutions from sharing their power with others, who in theory, are supposed to be participating and/or equal members. Failure to share this power is certainly made easier if people can be convinced that "the way things are is the best way!" Baum again applies his critique to the Catholic Church:

> Despite the promising statements made at Vatican II, the ideal of greater participation has not yet modified the exercise of power in the Catholic Church. The Jurisdictional order is still strictly from the top down, even though the ideals have become collegial.[355]

Summary Analysis of Oppression

Although oppression may only cause poverty or other overt signs of injustice, i.e., marginalization or exploitation, in certain sectors of the population, the ideological symbols that legitimize institutional injustice contribute to the public values and ideals that affect virtually everyone, regardless of class or status. These ideological symbols produce false consciousness that in turn produces anxieties, tensions and conflicts, and above all alienation or human estrangement. Baum is careful not to say that all psychic disorders are the result of oppression, for this would be a denial of human freedom, but he does believe that

> it is impossible to understand the psychic wounds from which people suffer without examining the economic and social conditions under which they live.[356]

We have pointed out how Baum's understanding of "the poor" and "the oppressed" differ. The poor are the victims of economic oppression through which the basic needs for an

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[354] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 168.

[355] The Emergent Church, 137.

[356] Baum, "Theology Questions Psychiatry: An Address," 59.

adequate standard of living are denied. The oppressed include all those members of society who are adversely affected either by institutions or by the public values that have their origin in these institutions:

> We are oppressed, and, simultaneously, oppressors, not only through the various institutions that dehumanize us, but also through false symbols that dominate our imagination.[357]

Again, we see how Baum's dialectical understanding of social reality determines the character of his social analysis. Although oppression sometimes creates poverty, it always produces alienation. This alienation, or human estrangement, is incredibly widespread in Canada, as in most of the so-called "developed" nations:

> The harassed businessman, the exhausted laborer, the overworked housewife--the majority of the population...do not know how to make sense of the quest for authenticity and openness to being. They are often condemned to use all their energies just to survive.[358]

Baum is obviously not thinking of material survival alone, but also survival in the sense of not giving in to despair. As we shall see, Baum's understanding of liberation addresses both the problems of poverty and alienation in Canada.

FORMULATION OF A LIBERATION PROCESS

In this section, Baum's teaching on the process of liberation will be outlined and discussed. We will first present a brief summary of the theological anthropology upon which his model for the liberation process is based. After clarifying Baum's view of liberation as a "dialectical" and "dialogical" process, we will focus on his teaching on the relationship between religious conversion and human liberation. Baum's eschatology and his reflections on concrete actions relevant for Christians in Canada will be presented in the final sections of this chapter.

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[357] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 190.

[358] Baum, The Social Imperative, 136-37.

The Dynamics of Human Liberation

For Baum, human life is essentially social in nature. In his own words, "man is in need of the community to become himself."[359] He sees this as an obvious fact of human existence. Not only are we dependent on others for our physical survival, especially at the time of birth, but without others we would never become "conscious" persons:

> Unless there is a mother, or one taking her place, who calls out to the baby and evokes a response in him, there can be no conscious life. Consciousness is not a given: it comes about through coversation--being addressed and responding.[360]

This is a central aspect of Baum's theology and provides the key for understanding his liberation process. Stated simply, without meaningful interpersonal relationships, without participating in the life of the community, liberation cannot take place. Without other people in our lives, we cannot become more human, but will inevitably experience more and more alienation, loneliness, despair and de-humanization. For Baum, human nature is not one-dimensional, but dialogical. People come to be through dialogue; that is, listening and responding to others. Our nature is constituted by both personal and social dimensions.

Although we could never achieve consciousness without first being addressed by another, still, our personal consciousness is never simply the creation of the community to which we belong. Each individual person has a conscious ego that enables him/her to respond freely to a summons or call to new life:

> Man's growth is not wholly determined by unconscious forces: his conscious ego is the seat of freedom and hence enables him to respond to the summons addressed to him.[361]

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[359] Man Becoming, Baum, 47.

[360] Baum, Man Becoming, 143; See also 143, and "Alienation and Reconciliation," 143ff.

[361] Baum, Man Becoming, 45.

Although Baum believes that the Word and the Spirit are present to people everywhere and constitute their history, he also believes that "Christians alone are conscious of the redemptive mystery present in all human beings."[362]

Enough has been said concerning Baum's view of human nature to outline the principal steps involved in his understanding of the dynamics of human liberation:

1. We are addressed by a word that comes as grace, or gift, through dialogue with others.
2. This word of truth challenges us. If we remain open to this summons we experience a "raising of consciousness" that liberates our minds from false ideals and symbols.
3. After freely choosing to opt for the truth we have been made aware of, we are further challenged to act on this word. The character of this action is determined by the content of the message, as well as the context of the situation.

This model contains the essence of Baum's liberation process. It is a model for liberation that encompasses both personal and political dimensions, and applies to all situations equally.[363] In this light, every conversion or

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[362] Baum, Man Becoming, 64.

[363] Although Donald Evans is correct in identifying an emphasis on the "personal" in Man Becoming, and an emphasis on the "political" in Religion and Alienation, he unnesessarily polarizes these two dimensions of Baum's liberation process. Although such a polarization may facilitate analysis and help to clarify the various aspects of Baum's thinking, such a dichotomy does not exist in Baum's theology. Evans states that in Man Becoming, conversion involves three interrelated elements: a) recognizing and turning away from the defensive and destructive deceptions within oneself, b) identifying oneself with the authentic possibilities for love and creativity that emerge, and c) acknowledging divine grace at work in this personal liberation. He goes on to say that in Religion and Alienation, conversion involves three different interrelated elements: a) becoming aware of and turning from the injustices built into society, b) choosing an identification with the poor and the movements toward their emancipation, and c) acknowledging divine grace at work in political liberation. He further tells us that in Man Becoming liberation, or salvation, is personal, while in Religion and Alienation it is mainly political. Faith, Authenticity and Morality, [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980], 147ff. As outlined above, Baum believes that liberation occurs when people freely respond to a Word that summons them to new life. Liberation is always personal and social at the same time, for as we have noted time and time again, Baum refuses to treat these dimensions of human life separately. Such a word also acts as a definite call to

liberation experience has a degree of political significance. Humans are dialogical and society is dialectical: therefore, consistent with his teaching, Baum believes that the liberation process must be dialectical as well.

Dialectical and Dialogical nature of Liberation

Given Baum's dialectical understanding of oppression, it is not surprising to find that he believes

> the process by which men and women are saved from alienation includes the interaction of the symbolic and the institutional.[364]

Liberation implies some form of social change addressing both these orders:

> Social change...takes place through a dialectical process that involves changes in the symbolic order as well as social action attempting to move the established powers.[365]

If, as Baum believes, our consciousness is primarily determined by the dominant symbols and ideals generated by public institutions, then whenever we are addressed by a word of truth that challenges the symbols and ideas present in our minds we must determine whether they have their source in personal consciousness or in the public values, symbols, and ideals of society.

> The man involved in political struggle who refuses to seek self knowledge may end up in total blindness, be out of touch even with the social reality, and undo the work to which he dedicated his life. The Marxian and the Freudian Critiques can never be separated. Man can enter into his self-realization only as he is willing to wrestle with the enemy within and without.[366]

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action. The corresponding "praxis" will depend on the content of the message addressed and the context of the situation. It may involve radical political action or it can be as simple as listening to the truth about ourselves coming from another and then adopting this new understanding and acting on it. Both the dynamics and the process remain the same. Since Baum's understanding of liberation involves a transformation through conversion, liberation necessarily involves the whole person.

[364] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 140. See also 142.

[365] Baum, Man Becoming, 157.

What Baum means by "Marxian and the Freudian critiques" is the willingness to engage in both a critique of the symbols, values and structures that constitute the collective, or "social" consciousness of individuals in a given society as well as the symbols, values and interests that constitute personal consciousness. Why are we in need of both critiques? Because

> alienation is both rooted in personal life and fostered by oppressive trends in society, and the promise to overcome this alienation implies the interaction between changes in personal psychic life and changes in the social structures.[367]

Although our consciouness is heavily influenced by the public values and ideals that sustain our collective life, Baum insists that we are not completely determined by these public symbols, but are capable of independent thinking and creative activity. No matter how oppressive and dehumanizing a social system becomes, he believes that there is always hope that human creativity and good will can replace unjust structures with just ones, and replace false consciousness with a more truthful self-understanding. This constant interaction between the physical and psychic life of individuals on the one hand and the structural and symbolic dimensions of social institutions on the other is what Baum means by the dialectical relationship between person and society. This dialectical relation can involve false values and ideals that legitimize either social sin or personal mental aberrations, both conscious (crime) and unconscious (blindness, delusion, etc...). Or, it can be the creative use of imagination with the practical aim of alleviating situations of oppression. In either case, the structural framework of Baum's understanding of oppression and liberation is determined by his dialectical understanding of society.

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366 Baum, Man Becoming, 160

367 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation", 154.

Baum does not believe that we can either engage in critical thinking about ourselves or about the society we live in until we have been addressed by a message of truth that summons us to think and act in a new way. For Baum, this special word of truth, addressed to us at various times and in various situations, is actually "God's word present in history."[368] It is only after we have been addressed by such a word that we are able to identify the oppressive symbols and ideals in our minds that may have their source in the common symbols and ideals created by institutions.

Sometimes such a message summons all Christians to hear and accept the message as a call to conversion; a conversion that may involve a radical change in lifestyle as well as attitudes. Is there such a message being uttered today? Baum believes so, and refers to it as the call to identify with the poor. Since the first step in the liberation process is to be understood primarily as conversion, it is in this context that we shall explore Baum's teaching on the option for the poor.

Conversion and Option for the Poor

A summons to truth initiates a dialogical interaction which involves the person in both listening and responding. The content of the summons reveals a certain truth. If the response evoked by this word of truth is positive, that is, if the word of truth is recognized and accepted by the person, then a conversion may occur and transform the person. It is difficult, however, to accept the truth and act on it, and certainly much easier to hide behind defense screens. However, whether the summons is accepted or rejected, our response becomes constitutive of who we are. For Baum, these are the dynamics of human life.

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[368] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 45.

Although symbols and ideals can address us on both a conscious and unconcious level, it is only after we become conscious of a certain truth that we are able to act in a truly free manner. Baum illustrates his teaching in the following example:

> I may be exposed to the destructive influences of another person who has a certain power over me. But as soon as I become conscious of this, as soon as I recognize the influence this person has on me, I am called to a decision: either I reject the evil influence and become free, or I acknowledge the evil influence and submit to the destruction of my life.[369]

When we become conscious of the truth or falsehood in a given situation, and freely opt for the truth, then a conversion may occur. What comes before the actual conversion experience is a call to conversion. According to Baum, this word of truth primarily comes as gift through other people. Without being confirmed by the love of others, we would not even be able to respond to this word of truth. Baum believes that it is the love and care offered to us by others that create in us the strength to enter into the dialogue of life. We cannct respond to truth and thereby experience liberation unless we experience communion with others. This event happens primarily through dialogue.

Before such a commitment can take place, however, we must be summoned by this new and prophetic message. This message can come in many ways, but the message always comes as summons. Scripture is one such medium:

> If we read the Scriptures from the viewpoint of the oppressed, we hear what we did not hear before, a summons to social justice.[370]

Another way we can hear this message is through the theology that comes to us from Latin America. Often there is a tendency to react to this message in a defensive way,

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369 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 65. Emphasis mine.

370 Baum, "Blessed are the Poor," 88. It is not surprising to read that Baum refers to the "option for the poor" as "the theological reason for the Christian commitment to social justice." ["Neo-Conservative Critics of the Churches,] 45.

especially when Canada is identified by Latin American theologians as being a part of the "center" of capitalism. For Baum, this is not the spirit in which their message is to be received. He tells us that

> If we read this message as coming from brothers and sisters in Christ struggling for justice in Latin America, we may enter upon metanoia, experience a conversion of mind that enables us to look at our own institutions and discern how and to what extent they are involved in the oppression of Canadians--and Latin Americans.[371]

In this sense, the option for the poor is essentially a call to conversion. Commenting on the words of Pope John Paul II in the encyclical "Laborem Exercens," Baum states that

> what Pope John Paul II called "solidarity of the poor and with the poor" was not simply a political commitment, a secular stance; it was, properly speaking, a religious conversion in which resounded the whole of the Gospel.[372]

Behind this teaching is the belief that God is redemptively present in history, in all the dimensions of our personal and social life. As Baum puts it,

> the way to God is not through a turning away from the historical struggle but, on the contrary, through the identification with the movements in history that lead to personal and social emancipation.[373]

This suggests that

> conversion away from sin, personal-and-social, implies an identification with the poor, the dispossessed, the disfavored and with the movements toward their emancipation, an identification that precedes the critical reflection on policy and strategy.[374]

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371 Baum, "Canadian Bishops adapt Liberation Theology," 100. Baum believes that the new social Gospel in the Catholic Church is primarily the result of radical changes that have taken place in large sectors of the Cathclic Church in Latin America. The Social Imperative, 176.

372 Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 58.

373 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 161. We shall discuss how the identification with the poor has both personal and social liberating power in a later portion of this chapter.

374 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 220. This is a good example or how Baum interprets the theory/praxis dialectic and applies it to his theology.

Conversion is here understood as the free response of individuals who hear the word addressed and "opt" or chose to commit themselves to the poor and their struggles for emancipation.

With conversion comes a raising of consciousness. For Baum, "the raising of consciousness in regard to institutional life is part and parcel of the conversion away from sin."[375] This is also one of the signs of authentic conversion to Jesus: "Conversion to Jesus demands a raising of consciousness in regard to the structural evil in society."[376] After we hear the summons and respond, a raising of consciousness occurs, and we act on the basis of this new consciousness. Given the prophetic message of the option for the poor, what does the raising of consciousness mean in terms of the North American context?

> The raising of consciousness in the complex situation of North America means the acknowledgement of the multiple forms of exploitation, and the turning away from the social dimension of sin...[which] implies an identification with the aims of the emancipatory movements.[377]

When Baum speaks of the "turning away from the social dimension of sin," and "identifying with the aims of the emancipatory movements," is he speaking only of changes in attitudes, or is he speaking of actual changes in lifestyle? Baum is reluctant to spell out his ideas in concrete terms. What he does say, however, seems to lead to a concrete identification with the poor and not simply with "the concerns" of the poor, no matter how well-intentioned they may be. Part of the reason for this is that we are unable to disaffiliate ourselves from social sin or even to become conscious of structural evil without adopting the perspective of the poor. Baum does not believe that this change can take place on an abstract level alone. Concrete

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375 Baum, Religion and Alienation, 209.

376 Baum, "Canadian Bishops Adapt Liberation Theology," Cross Currents, [28:1, 1978], 97.

377 Religion and Alienation, 220.

identification with the actual historical struggles of the poor and oppressed is essential. As he states elsewhere,

> Since the particular forms of blindness are rooted in the societal reality of the people struck by it, what is necessary is that they resituate themselves in regard to this society. What is needed is commitment and action. Ideas change when their "bearers" undergo significant societal change.[378]

Baum further tells us that

> While we are sociologically identified with our class and country, we have the freedom personally to identify ourselves with the poor, to find actions that give body to this identification, to perceive the world in a changed manner, and eventually to think thoughts and develop theology that actually promote the transformation and liberation of God's world."[379]

We can see that Baum understands the "option for the poor" as a call to religious conversion. We are addressed by this call, and if we hear the message correctly, we are faced with a choice: either we opt for the poor and join them in their struggle for justice and liberation, or we remain blind to the truth about society, and ultimately, about ourselves. Since Baum believes that God makes his redemptive grace available in the history of men and women who struggle for truth and justice, not to opt for the poor is tantamount to refusing the fullness of God's saving grace. After opting for the poor and undergoing some "significant societal change," how do we "find actions that give body to this identification?" After making a commitment to the poor and engaging in social analysis, the only way effective change can come about is through social action. This action presupposes an alternative vision of society. Before any concrete strategies for change can be suggested, a new vision of life that is based on different values and ideals must exist. Baum refers to this vision as eschatological thinking.

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[378] Baum, The Social Imperative, 122.

[379] Baum, The Social Imperative, 27.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

In the final sections of this chapter we will consider Baum's practical teaching on liberation from oppression. We shall look first at his basic understanding of what Christians should expect or "hope" for the future. Then we shall consider his views on how Christians might actively work towards this eschatological vision in terms of concrete strategies and changes, both political and pastoral.

Eschatology

Just as the "option for the poor" has a two-fold function or task, one epistemological [analytical perspective] and the other activist [religious conversion], Baum understands "eschatology" as having two similar but distinct tasks. In the first place eschatology provides the alternative vision of life which acts as a measure for interpreting and evaluating society. In the second place, this eschatology provides the imagination for practical strategies and policies. We have earlier discussed the first function of eschatology with respect to social analysis, whereby eschatology serves to critique present situations of oppression. The second function of eschatology focuses on the future possibilities for human society in the light of God's promises. Here the same Christian vision used to critique and evaluate society provides the vision for practical strategies and policies.

Before social change can occur, a new vision of what life could (and should) be must replace the false consciousness that pacifies the desire for a better society. As Baum notes, "the eschatological message leads to social action."[380] This message provides the vision and primary motivation for change. For Baum, this new vision is based on the Gospel message of Jesus.

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[380] Baum, The Social Imperative, 27.

> The saving message of Jesus Christ intends to deliver people from false consciousness and appoints them to transform the world.[381]

Baum holds that a heightened sense of responsibility for the future and a call for social action are dominant characteristics of modern consciousness:

> Since today men can modify the forms of personal and social life, and even destroy human life on earth, they have become responsible for the future as never before in history.[382]

This new vision does not point to an unrealizable utopia, but is essentially a divine summons to new life:

> Eschatology is divine revelation and hence is a mode of divine self-communication to men, initiating them into new life, personal and social.[383]

Eschatology

> discloses a view of man: human life is open-ended; man cannot be considered simply in universal terms without thought to his particularity; man's future is not confined to possibilities determined by present causes.[384]

Eschatology reaffirms the creativity in human beings. It tells us that we are responsible for our future, and because poverty and oppression are caused by humans beings, they can be eliminated by human beings as well. No social change will be effective in the long run unless it is inspired by eschatological thinking:

> If a movement for significant social change is to be successful, it must be accompanied by a cultural strategy that invites people to think new thoughts and experience the attraction of an alternate vision.[385]

For Christians, the Gospel message of Jesus provides the essence of this new vision.

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[381] Baum, The Social Imperative, 125.

[382] Baum, Man Becoming, 165.

[383] Baum, Man Becoming, 103.

[384] Baum, Man Becoming, 115.

[385] Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 67.

Political Strategy

Given Baum's analysis of Canadian society, what are the actual political strategies he endorses for the overcoming of social injustice? He makes it clear that poverty is produced by economic forces that can be studied and analyzed, and that "people do not have to remain poor. What we have to do," he tells us, "is to replace an inadequate economic system by a better one."[386] This seems like a simple enough solution, but as we have already noted, the structures of capitalism extend to global porportions, and there is no government left that can control, let alone replace them at the present time. Baum suggests that

> the only way to control these giant corporations will be through the joint action of many national governments. What is needed is greater solidarity among the nations.[387]

How is the ordinary Christian to identify and participate in such an overwhelming project? Baum does not suggest that this is what Christians should actively work towards. He simply indicates that Global solidarity is what must ultimately happen before the multi-national and trans-national corporations can be held in check or dismantled.

Like many critical thinkers, Baum seems somewhat paralyzed by the complexity of oppression and asks "in what direction, then, will Canadian Catholics move when they commit themselves to social justice?" adding that "they may not always be united in a common political project."[388] He is sure, however, that no approach that attempts to insert Christian values into society will ever work because these values are directly opposed to the public values generated by the structures of capitalism. Echoing the Canadian Bishops and the encyclical by Pope John Paul II "Laborem Exercens," Baum points out that what is required is "praxis".

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386 Baum, "Blessed are the Poor," 87.

387 Baum, The Social Imperative, 229.

388 Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 34.

> Christians can no longer seriously defend the idea that spiritual values can be extended to the operation of the large economic institutions on which depend the well-being of Canadians and the survival of the world. What is demanded today is prophetic criticism of the present order and a corresponding praxis, either reformist or radical, that aims at a new economic order.[389]

What are the differences between radicals and reformists? Reformists see a contradiction between capitalism and democracy in that capitalism does not allow for equality and participation in decision-making and profit sharing. They believe that through political effort,

> it should be possible to increase the power of democracy and democratic public values and in this way restrain the tent toward profit and competition and lessen its impact on personal consciousness.[390]

Radicals, on the other hand, have given up the idea that capitalism can be reformed. They long for the breakdown of the present system and the rebirth of a new society based on socialist principles. Baum neither rejects nor completely endorses either of these two political options, but states that

> it is my view that the full Christian witness in North America needs these two options. Neither one by itself embodies the full meaning of the Gospel for our times.[391]

Reformists can engage in any number of reform strategies relevant to a particular social concern or political policy. By opting for the dismantling of capitalism, radicals are dealing with the whole system and must, therefore, have a practical alternative vision of a new economic system that could take the place of capitalism. Baum tells us that

> in the United States and (English-speaking) Canada there is no clearly definable Christian left. The radical Christians who are in solidarity with the oppressed, criticize capitalism and involve themselves in social action are <u>not</u> united in a socialist perspective.[392]

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389 Baum, "Values and Society," 30-31.

390 Baum, "Values and Society," 28.

391 Baum, <u>Religion and Alienation</u>, 221-222.

392 Baum, <u>The Social Imperative</u>, 181.

Although Baum does not claim to be a socialist, he does tell us that "there is no socialism in the world that can be imitated; if a just social order is to exist in Canada it must be created anew."[393] Baum points out that not all radicals are socialists, and many distrust both socialism and capitalism equally. These radicals seek an alternative to both these political systems, such as intentional communities, or radical co-op ventures.

Pastoral Policy

Regardless of what political strategy Christians adopt, Baum sees a need for a new spirituality to oppose the consumer ethos in society. This is one of the few passages in his writings that suggests a movement of "disaffiliation" or "non-involvement" with the lifestyle generated by our wider society:

> If, therefore, it is necessary in today's hungry world to tell people that the simple life is more truly evangelical and that simple food is to be preferred by us in the developed countries, above all for its symbolic meaning, revealing our solidarity with the whole human family, then we must do this not by making people feel guilty about the pleasure of eating but rather by arguing that it is possible for us to enjoy simple food, good bread, cider and cheese, as much and even more than others enjoy gourmet food tainted as it is by its symbolic connection with elitism and economic privilege. We are in need of a spirituality that reveals to us how pleasure, gratuitous pleasure (not commodities) nourishes the Christian life.[394]

Such items as "good bread, cider and cheese" may be simple, but they are by no means inexpensive. They are, in fact, quite outside the food budget of the poor. The food the lower classes are forced to consume is certainly "tainted" by its connection with elitism, but this taintedness is not merely "symbolic", but the result of the additives and preservatives present in the less expensive processed foods they are forced to buy.[395]

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[393] Baum, "Political Theology in Canada," 45.

[394] Baum, The Social Imperative, 145.

[395] For an excellent analysis of the the food industry in

Besides this poorly developed spirituality of frugality, Baum makes a number of other practical pastoral suggestions which are a good deal more valuable. He tells us that "to recommend to people suffering from grave alienation that all they need is an inward change and then a successful adjustment to the social order I find objectionable."[396] One of the most effective ways Baum believes that such alienation can be overcome is by joining "emancipatory movements or groups". Regardless of whether these movements are successful in achieving their political goals, i.e., removing structural injustice, Baum believes that they still serve a valuable function in overcoming alienation. As he puts it, "collective involvement for justice bears within it psycho-therapeutic power."[397] These movements help to uncover the psychic wounds inflicted on people and provide a more truthful, and liberating, self-understanding:

> Oppressed people can be made to feel that they find themselves at the lowest level because this is where they belong. Emancipatory movements, therefore, while reaching out for political goals and economic power, have a spiritual task; they promote a new self-understanding."[398]

As he further notes,

> It is precisely this collective engagement that delivers people from their fears, their passivity, their self-contempt, and other psychic burdens that oppression has inflicted on them. Personal transformation here accompanies and follows social involvement.[399]

Although many people who suffer directly from social injustice find the motivation and/or opportunity to join emancipatory groups which struggle against injustice, vast numbers of Canadians experience human estrangement, yet

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Canada and how the poor are unable to buy healthy food, see Michael Czerny S.J. and Jamie Swift, Getting Started on Social Analysis in Canada, [Toronto, Ontario: Between the Lines Publishing Ltd., 1984], especially Chapter two, "In Sickness and in Health," and chapter six, "Lost in the Supermarket".

396 Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 152.

397 Baum, "Theology Questions Psychiatry: An Address," 58.

398 Baum, The Social Imperative, 138.

399 "Theology Questions Psychiatry: An Address," 57.

cannot identify with the particular plight of emancipatory groups. As Baum notes, the lack of authentic community with meaningful interpersonal relationships is a widespread phenomenon in Canada, especially for urban dwellers:

> The mobility of modern life easily tears the bonds that create community, and thus vast numbers of people in the metropolitan areas find themselves alone and isolated. Their place of work (if they have a job) does not provide them with warm human relations.[400]

He goes on to state that "in such a society of forced loneliness, ethnic identity and loyalty offer people a strong human bond and the possibility of community." This may be so for ethnic groups, but what of the rest of Canadians in a similar predicament? If Baum believes that "the Church is the community where God's universal redemptive presence is proclaimed, celebrated and possessed in Jesus Christ,"[401] then should not the Church be the milieu where Christians find authentic community? Baum here points to the teaching of sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Peter Berger who emphasize the need for mediating structures that would facilitate community in modern society. He makes it clear, however, that

> from a Christian point of view it is important to distinguish between mediating structures that isolate people in their own circle of contentment and those that bring people together in supportive communities strengthening them to assume social responsibility for the wider society.[402]

He goes on to say that

> If the Churches want to learn from the sociology of mediating structures and at the same time remain faithful to their social teaching, they should conceive their parishes and congregations as missionary communities, as communities where vital, personal interchanges nourishes authentic humanity and at the same time generates urgent concern for justice in society.[403]

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401 Baum, Man Becoming, 66. Emphasis mine.

402 Baum, "Neo-Conservative Critics of the Churches," 50.

403 Baum, "Neo-Conservative Critics of the Churches," 50.

Baum does not discuss what practical steps would be involved in this move toward "missionary" communities, nor does he further explain what exactly he means by the use of the term. He does recognize, however, the need for Churches to provide the means whereby vital, personal interchanges nourishes authentic humanity, but again, he does not discuss what such "means" would be for the Church(es) in Canada.

Summary

For Baum, there is only one liberation process that has both personal and social dimensions. This belief is at the center of all his reflections on social action. As was pointed out earlier, Baum's approach to the liberation process addresses both the problem of alienation and the problem of social injustice. Although these two dimensions of oppression are interdependent, Baum perceives alienation as being primarily the result of an oppressive social consciousness, while poverty, marginalization and exploitation are principally caused by institutional structures. Since social consciousness is comprised of symbols and ideals produced by the institutional structures in order to legitimize their behaviour, alienation and social injustice are simply two sides of the same social oppression. Although only sectors of the population experience the actual injustices inflicted through institutions, virtually everyone experiences the oppressive social consciousness that produces alienation.

In Baum's view, any liberation strategy that addresses only one side of this dialectic is inadequate. Liberation must address the whole problem. It must seek changes in the symbolic as well as the institutional order, freeing people both from false consciousness and psychic illness, as well as from the injustices caused by institutions that produce false consciousness.

Alienation is human estrangement, and the only way it can be overcome is through community. Baum suggests two ways in

which such community may be achieved: emancipatory groups and missionary communities. Both must be actively involved with struggles for social justice.

CHAPTER 4: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Similarities

This chapter will draw attention to the major similarities and differences that exist between the writings of Metz and Baum on the theme of liberation from oppression. The principal aim is to determine whether there is a common core of teaching that could be considered a consensus. These similarities will be discussed within the three-level theological model outlined in chapter one: 1.analysis of oppression, 2.formulation of a liberation process, and 3.practical application to political and pastoral strategy.

Analysis of Oppression

We have earlier noted that the four basic dimensions involved in the analysis of oppression are analytical method, perspective, scope and focus. There is a basic agreement between Metz and Baum on the perspective, focus and scope for social analysis, as well as a fundamental agreement concerning the methodological approach for interpreting situations of oppression. These similarities will now be briefly discussed.

1. Analytical Method. Both Metz and Baum have clearly recognized that theology must provide an analysis of contemporary situations of oppression. Metz states that "if we are concerned with the human situation...we have first to analyze this situation."[404] Baum tells us that "the assessment of evil powers which oppress people in their concrete situations is...an essential part of theology."[405] They agree that the present needs of Christians must be addressed by providing an intelligible and practical

[404] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 3.

[405] Baum, The Social Imperative, 10.

presentation of the Christian faith. This presentation can only be accomplished if theologians first discover what those needs are: social analysis must precede theological reflection.[406] This is not to suggest that theclogians engage in social analysis from a value-free perspective, but indicates, rather, how theological reflection must never be based solely on pure theory or "absolute" reflections that can then be subsequently "applied" to specific situations. These situations must first be analyzed and understood if theological reflection is to be intelligible and meaningful. Still, a prior theology is necessary in order to determine what counts as oppression. Both Metz and Baum are aware of this factor.

The two authors have both adopted the same dialectical approach in their analytical method. The character of each theologian's analysis of oppression respects the basic dialectical and dialogical dimensions of personal and social life. Both have realized the importance of recognizing and analyzing the various interchanges that occur between the personal and social dimensions of human life, especially the basic dialectic between personal and social consciousness. They are also aware that social institutions maintain a definite system of values and ideals in society.[407]

2. Analytical Perspective. Metz and Baum hold that conversion to Jesus demands a special concern for the poor and oppressed. They therefore agree that in order to uncover situations of oppression one must first adopt the perspective of those who are poor and oppressed.[408] Baum believes that this is the only way that theologians can arrive at a truthful understanding of society.[409] Metz tells

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[406] See Metz, Theology of the World, 111, Faith in History and Society, 89; Baum, The Social Imperative, 125.

[407] Baum, "Values and Society," 26. Metz, Faith in History and Society, 91.

[408] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 105; Baum and Cameron, Ethics and Economics, 44.

[409] Baum, "Political Theology in Conflict," 85.

us that we must "look at the public 'theatrum mundi' [from the perspective]...of the conquered and the victims,"[410] if we wish to arrive at a correct evaluation of ourselves and our society. They believe that in order to arrive at a correct analysis of oppression it is absolutely essential to focus first and foremost on the actual victims of oppression. Identification with the poor has a definite epistemological character.

They also agree that the promised kingdom of God is the measure to be used in a critique of social oppression. Metz tells us that the "hope in a God of the resurrection provides the criteria which is used to oppose prevailing unjust structures and relationships."[411] Metz claims that the source of hope must be recognized in Jesus. Rather than pacifying, the memory of Jesus's sufferings inspires commitment to justice and peace in solidarity with the poor. Baum says essentially the same thing: "The promised realm of justice and peace is the measure by which Christians evaluate and judge present society."[412] Both recognize that no critique of society is value-free, but contains a definite world-view based on certain fundamental religious and/or philosophical beliefs and values. For Christians, this means the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

3. Analytical Scope. A fundamental concern for the poor and oppressed naturally leads to a "global" analysis. This is so because social oppression is connected with the multi-faceted and interrelated character of our present world context. Baum tells us that when North American thinkers analyze the ills and injustices in their own countries they must take into consideration the "economically interconnected world."[413] Metz is of the same opinion. He

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[410] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 105.

[411] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 76.

[412] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 284.

[413] Baum, The Social Imperative, 11.

tells us that "any analysis...must nowadays inevitably be made on a world-wide scale. Socio-political and enonomic relationships are becoming increasingly interdependent."[414]

4. Analytical focus: Capitialism. It is from within similar contexts of middle-class, capitalist societies that Metz and Baum have interpreted oppressive situations and trends. The fundamental priciples that govern life in such societies are the freedom of the market, the principle of exchange, and the maximization of profits by means of production. The freedom of the market promotes a widespread individualism by creating the need for competition between the members of society.[415] In many cases the need to compete is directly linked to the need to survive. The values associated with this principle are more or less private, and definitely not Christian. It is difficult, if not impossible, to trust those with whom we are forced to compete. We are driven by private goals of achievement and success which easily lead to the selfish values of possessiveness and personal glory. The fear of failing in a highly competitive market tends to place personal security before the interests and needs of others. This privatized lifestyle not only estranges human beings from the community of other people, but also alienates them from the substance of their own humanity. Both Metz and Baum have drawn attention to this dimension of oppression and its connection with the economic system of capitalism.[416]

5. Analysis of Oppression in the Church. In their analysis of oppression in the Church, Metz and Baum have singled out certain ideologies that produce false consciousness and injustice. The most significant of these are the anti-Jewish, anti-feminist, and anti-pluralist trends in Church teaching and theology. All of these have

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[414] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 4.

[415] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 35ff.

[416] Metz, The Emergent Church, 35ff. Baum, "Values and Society," 27.

the effect of legitimizing a male-dominated, authoritarian institutional structure for the Church.[417]

Formulation of a Liberation Process

Because Metz and Baum have identified the same situations of oppression in their analysis, it is not surprising to find a good deal of similarity in their formulation of a liberation theology. These similarities will now be briefly discussed.

1. Dialectical Liberation Process. A deep sense of how the personal and social dimensions of human life are historically situated leads both theologians to treat theological themes and concepts dialectically. Each has pointed out how social injustice and human alienation are at once rooted in personal life and fostered by oppressive trends in society. To overcome oppression, therefore, requires interaction between changes in the personal and in the social dimensions of human life.[418]

2. Liberating Grace. The dynamics of human dialogue and communion provide the locus for the mediation and reception of liberating grace. Liberation is fundamentally understood as a gift of "being" bestowed by God and mediated through others. When people accept and reinforce one another, they make it possible for others to accept and truly "be" themselves. This focus on the interpersonal nature of grace is central to each theologian's understanding of the dynamics involved with human liberation.

Although liberating grace is offered as a free gift from God, both Metz and Baum recognize the reality of free will in the reception of this healing grace. Human beings must freely "accept" this gift that comes to them through others, and consciously acknowledge the presence of this gift in their response. Baum tells us that we have a "conscious"

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[417] Metz, The Emergent Church, 73; Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 165ff.

[418] Metz, The Emergent Church, 3; Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 154.

ego which must freely respond to this gift of healing and liberation,[419] and Metz tells us that we are to accept and "consciously acknowledge" this same healing grace.[420]

3. Liberation as a Community Process. Since liberating grace is primarily mediated through others, it is not surprising to find that Metz and Baum agree that liberation must take place in the milieu of interpersonal relationships and community. Metz tells us that "conversion...can only be achieved together with others,"[421] and Baum tells us that "man comes to be through conversation with others as well as through a deeper, less conscious sharing with others in love and fellowship."[422] Both agree that liberation must occur in the context of community.

4. Theology as Liberating Critique. The emphasis on the social dimension of human life leads to an interest in the public values and ideals of social consciousness. Through the uncovering of ideological falsehoods, a "consciousness raising" occurs which exposes the dimensions of sin and oppression in society. In this way, theology offers a liberation of the mind through enlightenment to the truth.[423] Metz believes that "the Christian community...[speaks] out of its Christian conscience on behalf of the future...[by] making a liberating critique of the social and political reality."[424] Baum tells us that "what is demanded today is prophetic criticism of the

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[419] Baum, Man Becoming, 45.

[420] Metz, Poverty of Spirit, 5. Both theologians have freely adopted the theological anthropology and "universalist" teaching on grace put forth by Karl Rahner. This was the dominant interpretation and emphasis of both theologians in the late sixties and early seventies after this teaching was given ecclesiastical approval in the documents of Vatican II.

[421] Metz, The Emergent Church, 72.

[422] Baum, Man Becoming, 41.

[423] Baum, Man Becoming, 45ff.

[424] Metz, Theology of the World, 152; See also The Emergent Church, 40.

present order...."[425]

5. Option for the Poor. Both Metz and Baum have given the category of "solidarity with the poor" a fundamental status in their theology. They refer to it as the principal sign of authentic conversion to Jesus.[426] They also make it clear that the option for the poor has both mystical and political dimensions, and leads to an identification with the poor in the social and political sense.[427]

In the context of their own societies, the option for the poor necessarily involves a concrete struggle against the values and ideals of Capitalism. This means a struggle against the systems and established powers that generate and/or sustain oppressive trends in society. It involves active engagement and dialogue with society on the one hand, and disaffiliation from false values and principles on the other. As we shall see in a later section of this chapter, Metz and Baum place a different degree of emphasis on social "action" and social "disaffiliation" in their liberation process.

Political Strategy and Pastoral Policy

Metz and Baum agree that Christians must work towards the future kingdom of peace and justice promised by God. Although they do not believe that this kingdom can fully come about in history, both emphasize the need for Christians to engage in social action that transforms the world more and more into the eschatological kingdom of God. Baum tells us that "the saving message of Jesus first delivers people from false consciousness, then appoints them to transform the world.[428] Metz tells us that "the future

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[425] Baum, "Values and Society," 30-31.

[426] Baum, Ethics and Economics, 58; Followers of Christ, 49,54,67,79.

[427] Metz, Followers of Christ, 49. Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 161.

[428] Baum, The Social Imperative, 125.

lies increasingly in our hands" and that Christians must, therefore, transform the world in accordance with the future promises of God.[429]

Both agree that changes must take place in the social structures of human society if alienation and oppression are to be overcome. In terms of practical strategy this means that oppressive social structures must be replaced by just ones. Metz tells us that "what we need in the long run is a new form of political life and new political structures,"[430] and Baum believes that we have "to replace an inadequate economic system by a better one."[431]

This new political strategy must be accompanied by a change of lifestyle characterized by an identification with the poor and oppressed. This solidarity must be of such a character that it habitually alters one's way of life. Baum tells us that the call is to "resituate" ourselves in regard to society, while Metz tells us that a conversion of heart would first mean a change in our "established systems of needs...[then] situations in society...[aiming] at a fundamental revision of one's habitual way of life."[432] All of this change must occur within the context of the social oppression generated by the economic system of capitalism. Solidarity with the poor and oppressed not only serves as a sign of conversion to Jesus, but also acts as a prophetic criticism of the present order.[433]

Despite these essential agreements, the actual strategies each theologian puts forth for a liberation process are quite different. Whereas Metz addresses the structures and practices of the Church and the "bourgeois" lifestyle of

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[429] Theology of the World, 89.

[430] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 102.

[431] Baum, "Blessed are the Poor," 87.

[432] Baum, The Social Imperative, 122. Metz, The Emergent Church, 3.

[433] Baum, "Values and Society," 30-31; Metz, Theology of the World, 123,152ff, and The Emergent Church, 91.

present-day Christians, Baum speaks primarily in terms of liberation from oppressive social systems.

Differences

In the following sections the major differences that exist in the teachings of Metz and Baum on the theme of liberation from oppression will be outlined and discussed. The same format used in our treatment of similarities will once again be adopted, but with one small difference. Although these similarities were presented in a more or less straightforward manner, in actual fact they are similarities only from a certain fundamental perspective. There is a basic difference in the methodological approach of these two theologians which results in a great deal of divergency of emphasis and focus on analytical and pragmatic levels. In the following sections these divergencies will be discussed within the framework of this fundamental difference in method, but also within the context of the basic agreements previously outlined.

Analysis of Oppression

Both Metz and Baum have focused on middle-class values, ideals and structures in their analysis of oppression. Still, within this overall framework, they have given significantly different interpretations to the basic dialectic between the personal and social dimensions of oppression and liberation.

Metz tends to focus on the personal dimensions of lifestyle and consciousness, while Baum primarily considers social institutions and the public values and ideals they generate. Whereas Metz believes that present situations of social oppression have resulted from the conscious abuse of freedom evident in the middle-class "praxis of control,"[434] Baum tells us that we have quite possibly built the

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[434] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 149.

institutions which are now the source of our alienation with the best of motives.[435]

This fundamental difference in emphasis may possibly have its source in the different methods Metz and Baum employ in their respective analyses of oppression. Although both theologians share a similar dialectical understanding and analysis of oppression, their analytical methods are not of the same "type". How these methods differ will now be discussed.

Baum employs sociological tools to uncover the hidden dimensions of social reality. By examining the actual structures of the various institutions within society, especially the economic system of capitalism, he has discovered the existence of three levels of social class directly linked to the production and consumption of goods and services. He believes the very structures and "logic" of capitalism, and the competitive principles upon which they are founded, have led to the unequal distribution of wealth and the creation of a small elite class in Canada. When he observes the destruction of our natural environment, for example, he finds the source of this exploitation in the business practices and policies of the wealthy elite class.[436] The use and abuse of natural resources have occurred for the basic interests of power and money.

Metz employs a quite different method in his analysis of oppression. Although he observes the same basic phenomenon of the exploitation of natural resources and the consequent ecological chaos such exploitation has produced, he finds the source of such oppressive and destructive trends in a particularly scientific mind-set marked by dominative knowledge.[437] He believes that modern middle-class human beings have falsely defined themselves as "the ones in

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[435] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 149.

[436] Baum, "Attack on the New Social Gospel," 101.

[437] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 111.

control," a view which has led to widespread policies and systems based on principles of domination. He grasps how this oppression is linked to the system of capitalism, but he believes that it is the orientation to control on the part of practical understanding, rather than the economic system itself, which has led to the exploitation and poisoning of our natural environment.

The above example illustrates the basic difference between the primary focus of each theologian's analysis of oppression. Metz gives primacy to personal lifestyle and consciousness, i.e., the human spirit of domination which has consciously constructed systems of exploitation and control, Baum gives primacy to social structures and the oppressive influence public values, symbols, and ideals have on human life. This difference in emphasis gives a slightly different character to virtually every dimension of each theology.

It is interesting to note that Metz consistently speaks of the "principle of exchange" in his analysis of capitalism, whereas Baum talks of "the freedom of the market". Metz's emphasis on "exchange" draws attention to the type of relationships humans have with one another while participating in the economic life of society. Baum's focus on the "freedom of the market" also reflects the competitive character of human relationships, but suggests that the source of this competitive lifestyle can be primarily attributed to the principles upon which capitalism is based. Again, we can here see a focus on the "personal" in Metz and an emphasis on the "institutional" in Baum.

With Metz there is always a certain conscious, and therefore, "responsible" dimension to his analysis of oppression. Baum also recognizes this dimension of social oppression but places the conscious responsibility for such oppression on a very small percentage of society's citizens, especially the powerful members of the economic elite. Baum

by no means places all the responsibility on these powerful individuals, but clearly recognizes that it is the principles and structures of capitalism that constitute the main source of oppression. Although he tells us that "collective decisions, made by councils is the level where personal sin clearly enters into the creation and expansion of social sin,"[438] he also recongnizes that "the masters too are estranged from their true humanity."[439] He does not believe that the majority of people are consciously aware of how they participate in oppressive systems or help to keep such systems intact. He tells us, rather, that the new self-understanding produced from participating in social life is acquired without conscious realization, i.e., we are formed by it:

> by participating in economic life...[human beings] acquire a new self-understanding, and, even without realizing it, they are transformed in accordance with the public ideals of profit and competition,"[440]

Many of the basic similarities in the earlier sections of this chapter must be understood within the context of this basic difference of emphasis in the personal/social dialectic we have been discussing.

There is almost a complete lack of actual social data in Metz's analysis. There is little mention of the various institutions in society and how they interact, no treatment of the various classes and/or marginalized groups, and no critique of the elite, the real "subjects in control." His analysis of oppression suggests that all those who participate in oppressive and competitive exchange societies do so with both a relative degree of equality as well as a certain degree of conscious choice. Baum draws attention to the great disparity within capitalist societies, and leaves the reader with a picture of the powerful riding on the

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[438] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 202.

[439] Baum, The Social Imperative, 140.

[440] Baum, "Values and Society," 27. Emphasis mine.

backs of the poor. The poor, and "not so powerful," do not participate in such societies because they conciously choose or wish to do so, but because they have no other choice but to do so! Although Metz tells us that the principle of exchange determines all relationships in society, he does not say that it also allows the rich to triumph over the poor. Baum does make this claim.

Whereas Metz and Baum identify the same oppressive values and ideals of materialistic cultures such as those of Germany and Canada, Metz primarily attributes the presence of affluence and pleasure-oriented consumption to egoism and spiritual decadence. One gets a much different view from Baum who sees this "ethos" as a false promise of fulfillment society makes to its citizens. People work to the point of exhaustion, but because the means and ends of production are controlled by the powerful rather than the laborers, workers can find no real fulfillment in their work. The frustration and emptiness of this lifestyle makes it very easy for the same company owners who reap the benefits of other people's work to lure these same workers into buying their products or services. It is no coincidence that the best revenue comes from products, devices and services that help people forget the work they must do. Baum does not see such affluence as a sign of conscious greed or spiritual decadence, but as the consequence ensuing from the principles and structures of capitalism. Whereas Metz refers to the middle-class as "the subjects in control", Baum tells us that not only are middle-class citizens <u>not</u> in control, but they too are the victims of an oppressive social consciousness which produces social tensions, mental sickness, psychological conflicts, and moods of depression often ending in suicide. These are not the hallmarks of guilty egoists.

Enough has been stated by way of example to illustrate the basic differences in Metz's and Baum's analysis of

oppression. Although the basic framework and consequences of oppression are more or less identical, Baum finds the primary source of oppression in social consciousness and the institutional structures of society. Metz also recognizes that trends of oppression are grounded in social consciousness, but he believes that they have have their primary source in the the hearts and minds of egoistic human beings, rather than the institutions of society.

It is difficult to determine whether Metz believes that this dominating and selfish attitude of "grasping and struggling for advantage" is associated with human malice, or whether it is an attitude that reflects a certain "sickness" in society, for he does refer to it as "interiorized capitalism" which he believes must be "exorcized" by the power of love.[441] The use of the word "exorcized" certainly seems to denote a certain "possession" or control over and above conscious free will. He further states that the oppressive principles of domination and individualism have extended to such a degree that they form the "psychic foundations of our total sociocultural life," which "makes the human being incapable of seeing himself and judging himself through the eyes of his victims,"[442] To what degree are individuals guilty of oppression? If they are incapable of seeing and judging themselves correctly because of an oppressive false consciousness, as Metz seems to suggest, how may we explain Metz's emphasis on the recognition and repentance of personal guilt? Metz does not clarify this important dialectic.

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[441] Metz, The Emergent Church, 40.

[442] Metz, The Emergent Church, 36.

Formulation of a Liberation Theology

Just as there is a basic difference in emphasis in the way Metz and Baum interpret the personal/social dialectic in their analysis of oppression, there is also a fundamental difference in their understanding of the Church/world dialectic in their formulation of a liberation process. This section will uncover the essential character of this difference by reinterpreting the basic similarities discussed earlier in this chapter in the light of this basic difference. However, we will first consider how an emphasis on the personal in Metz and on the social in Baum results in a different interpretation of the primary movement or direction for a liberation process.

1. Dialectical Liberation Process. We have noted that Metz and Baum agree that liberation must be understood as a dialectical process involving changes in both the personal and social orders. What we find, however, is that they give quite different interpretations to the way liberation takes place within this process. Whereas Baum gives primacy to social change, Metz gives primacy to personal change. What we intend by the word "primacy" is a focus on change within the context of either the personal or social order. Personal change must always take place before liberation can occur, but in the elaboration of a liberation process a primary focus on either the personal or social radically alters the character of the process. This is somewhat vague stated abstractly, but further clarification should simplify this important distinction.

In his early theology (theology of the world) Metz gave primacy to the social in his understanding of liberation. He believed that if Christians were to engage themselves in humanizing the world through active involvement in it, they would thereby be imitating and following Christ. Personal liberation here accompanied, but also, in a sense, resulted from this involvement with the world. Metz later reversed

the order of this dialectic. In his most recent theology he tells us that Christians must first undergo a radical conversion of heart vis-a-vis the memory of Christ's suffering, follow and imitate Him in his solidarity with the poor and oppressed, then involve themselves in a new praxis of involvement with the world. Here personal change precedes social change.[443]

Baum presently holds a position similar to Metz's earlier understanding. The first movement in his understanding of the liberation process focuses on the social. He tells us that "the process by which men and women are saved from alienation includes the interaction of the symbolic and the institutional,[444] but what he believes this process demands first and foremost is "consciousness raising" concerning social sin, then a corresponding commitment to social change. Although "conscicusness raising" is a personal experience involving the liberation of the mind to truth, the focus is nevertheless on the social dimensions of oppression, not on conversion from personal sin. Since he believes that the principal source of oppression lies in the social order, Baum gives primacy to the social in his liberation process. Metz, on the other hand, believes that the main struggle must be "against our dominating-exploiting identity,"[445] and gives primacy to a personal conversion of the heart. Both theologians see the need for "identity" to be regained or established, but as we shall presently see, the character of this identity is by no means the same in each theologian's liberation process.

2. Liberating Grace. It is in their respective interpretations of liberating grace that the source of the difference in Metz's and Baum's understanding of the Church/world dialectic may possibly be found. Baum tells us

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[443] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 81.

[444] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 140.

[445] Metz, The Emergent Church, 43.

that God's offer of liberating grace is the same for non-Christians and Christians alike, regardless of whether the recipient is conscious of this reality or not. Baum recognizes the importance of Church sacraments and liturgy, but in his liberation process he does not elaborate his teaching on grace, conversion and Christian praxis in terms of Christian symbols, sacraments, and rituals, but speaks rather of the "Word" of truth present in all human dialogue and interpersonal relationships, which, he tells us, Christians know to be "God's Word present in history."[446]

Metz also accepts the basic doctrine of "anonymous Christianity", but he has not, like Baum, made it the primary horizon for his liberation process. In fact, he has serious misgivings about the whole theory. He tells us that

> A distinction has to be made between a Christianity that understands itself in reflection and is institutionalized in Church orthodoxy on the one hand and that anonymous Christianity on the other hand in which man can freely and fundamentally decide in favour of God without this having or even being able perhaps to understand itself as such in reflection.[447]

Since Metz's primary interest in elaborating a practical fundamental theology is to provide a practical structure within which Christian identity can be established. His Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology are all elaborated within the framework of the memories, narratives, symbols and praxis of Christianity. In this respect he provides a radical criticism of Rahner's transcendental theology as well as his theory of anonymous Christianity.[448]

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[446] Baum, "Alienation and Reconciliation," 45.

[447] Faith in History and Society, 159.

[448] It is important to recognize what Rahner himself has said concerning Metz's criticism of his theology: "Metz's critique of my theology (which he calls transcendental theology) is the only criticism which I take very seriously. I agree in general with the positive contribution in Metz's book [Faith in History and Society]....Therefore, I believe that my theology and that of Metz are not necessarily contradictory. However, I gladly recognize that a concrete mystagogy must, to use Metz's language, be at the same time "mystical and political." Quotation found in the introduction to James J. Bacik, Apologetics and the Eclipse or Mystery: Mystagogy according to Karl Rahner.

He does not regard them as in any sense "false", but he believes that they betray the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. In other words, he believes that they are "idealistic" and are incapable of establishing historical identity:

> My criticism [of anonymous Christianity], then, is principally directed against the attempt to explain the historical identity of Chritianity by means of speculative thought (Idealism), without regard to the constitutive function of Christian praxis, the congnitive equivalent of which is narrative and memory.[449]

Baum may well agree with Metz on this point, but his liberation process is not formulated with the aim of establishing a specifically "Christian" identity within the Church, but rather, a more truthful self-identity for all humans, especially those who suffer from an oppressive social consciousness. He tells us, for example:

> oppressed people can be made to feel that they find themselves at the lowest level because this is where they belong. Emancipatory movements, therefore,...have a spiritual task; they promote a new self-understanding."[450]

The primary means by which this liberating identity is established are through dialogue and interpersonal relationships whereby grace (although it may not necessarily be recognized as such) is mediated and received, and whereby personal and social ideological patterns of thinking are exposed.

Metz, on the other hand, tells us:

> The universality of the offer of salvation in Christianity does not have the character of a transcendental or universally historical concept of universality. It has the character of an "invitation"...the salvation that is founded "for all men [and women]" in Christ does not become universal via an idea, but via the intelligible power of a praxis, the praxis of following Christ.[451]

[Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980] ix-x.

[449] Metz, The Emergent Church, 163.

[450] Baum, The Social Imperative, 138.

[451] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 165.

Even in his earlier understanding of grace, Metz indicated the practical direction he would later take by saying that the recipients of grace must "consciously acknowledge" the presence and source of this liberating grace. For Christians, this means the presence of Jesus in human life as well as a celebration of his presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Since grace is made available in and through Jesus, the conscious acknowledgement of this reality must be evident in the day-to-day praxis of Christians.

3. Liberation as a Community Process. Metz has given extensive consideration to what the imitation and following of Christ concretely means for the community-based liberation process he espouses. He tells us that there is need of a "history of suffering" and a "history of redemption" to provide the memorative content for a truly authentic identity for Christians. This tradition must narrate a distinct history of freedom based on the redeeming liberation offered by God in the cross of Jesus.[452] The very activity of narrating this history describes the way in which Christian identity is fostered and maintained in the community. For Christians, the content of both memory and narrative must be the practical knowledge that comes only through the imitation and following of Christ. Metz believes that it is only when the memories of radical Christianity are aroused that liberation can occur by providing Christians with a new sense of historical identity as Christians.

Baum also believes that liberation must take place within the context of ongoing interpersonal relationships, but nowhere does he speak in any sense of a specifically "Christian" communitarian process. He speaks rather of emancipatory "groups" and "collective" action for social justice when referring to the communitarian nature of the liberation process. Whereas Metz speaks about the re-

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[452] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 129.

establishment of a definite Christian identity in a community-based process, Baum speaks rather of psychic healing and the displacement of false consciousness with a more truthful self-understanding provided through dialogue and interpersonal sharing.

Political Strategy and Pastoral Policy

Before discussing the basic differences in the practical strategies of Metz and Baum, the two fundamental differences in the theological methods of each theologian will first be recounted.

In the first place, Baum is far more "sociological" than Metz in his analysis of oppression in that he focuses on the actual structures, public values and symbols of social institutions. Metz's analysis, on the other hand, lacks specific reference to the details and particulars of his own social context. He bases his analysis on the dominant currents of thought present in the major philosophers and theologians of the modern era in an attempt

> to locate the crisis in that area where Christians in this country [Germany] appear to find their identity: in the relatively large degree of harmony between the practice of religion and the experience of life within society.[453]

His analysis centers on a critique of "bourgeois" religion. This focus reflects a basic difference in emphasis in their respective analyses of oppression.

In the second place, there is a similar divergency of focus between Metz and Baum with respect to the basic emphasis on either the Church or the world. Baum does incorporate certain basic Christian principles and beliefs into his theology, but his liberation process is primarily concerned with liberation from social oppression through a process of consciousness raising, of interpersonal relationships and of social action attempting to reform or remove oppressive and unjust structures. Metz focuses on

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[453] Metz, The Emergent Church, 1. Emphasis mine.

the need for a community-based liberation process in the Church that would see a return to a radical imitation and following of Christ. The goal is the establishment of a new and liberating historical identity for Christians. These two differences of emphasis greatly influence the character and content of each theologian's practical strategies for liberation.

As we noted earlier, both Metz and Baum recognize that the economic system of capitalism is founded on principles that promote oppressive trends in society. In the context of this analysis of oppression, both call for a new political and cultural strategy that aims at a new economic order. Since such a lofty goal does not seem to be realizable in the near future, the chief question concerns what Christians are to do in the interim. Both theologians agree that a lifestyle founded on capitalist principles is irreconcilable with an authentic Christian praxis, but what, then, are the practical options open to Christians at the present time? There are two basic approaches Christians can take: a praxis of <u>social action</u> for political and economic change in the wider society in which they live, and a praxis of <u>disaffiliation</u> away from the lifestyle based on capitalist principles and values along with the formation of basic communities. Both approaches are present, to a certain degree, in each theologian's liberation process, but Baum deals primarily with social action for radical changes in society, and Metz talks primarily of a process that would bring about the formation of a Christian historical identity within the context of base community structures. We shall now take a more precise look at each theologian's strategies for liberation in order to highlight how this difference in emphasis determines the basic focus and direction of their liberation process.

Baum's focus on the social dimensions of oppression in his analysis, and his corresponding interest in formulating

a liberation process based on the universality of grace, lead him to speak primarily of political strategies for society rather than political and/or pastoral strategies for the Church. He believes that Christians must commit themselves to a transformation of oppressive social structures by identifying with emancipatory movements in society.[454] He tells us that they can adopt either reformist or radical political strategies in their struggle for political goals and economic power,[455] but he himself believes that the full Christian witness needs both these types of political strategies at the present time.[456] Regardless of which type of political strategy Christians adopt, Baum believes that they will thereby be providing a prophetic criticism of the present order. This function of providing a liberating critique of society, as well as the new self-understanding and psychic healing promoted by emancipatory movements, is of central importance in Baum's understanding of a practical liberation process.

Baum also tells us that our Churches "should conceive their parishes and congregations as missionary communities where vital, personal interchanges nourish authentic humanity and...generate urgent concern for justice in society,"[457] but he does not clarify what exactly he means by "missionary communities", nor does he discuss the practical steps required for such a change to take place. Neither does he propose any strategy for a radical conversion away from the lifestyle of capitalism, but believes that non-Christians and Christians alike must work together towards transforming unjust and oppressive social structures.

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[454] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 220.

[455] Baum, The Social Imperative, 138

[456] Baum, Religion and Alienation, 221-222.

[457] Baum, "Neo-Conservative Critics of the Churches," 50.

Metz believes that there is a need for a radical democratization of the social infrastructure of society at large,[458] but when he attempts to translate this democratization strategy into actual policies for change he focuses primarily on the institutional structures of the Church. He tells us that the main Churches must begin to take on a more diversified form at the grass-roots level,[459] but also adds that his ideas on basic community Church structures are still in need of elucidation in terms of actual pastoral strategy.[460] This focus on a radical change of Church structures is the logical consegence of Metz's call to a radical conversion of hearts. Metz is not saying that the Church should "retreat" from society in the manner of a sect, but he does believe that unless Christians begin to live a life truly based on the imitation and following of Christ, they will not be able to experience the liberation offered by Jesus, nor provide a truly effective critique of society.

Although this chapter has presented the major similarities and differences that exist between the overall liberation process of each theologian, this comparative analysis could be greatly expanded. This research is only interested in provided the essential core of teaching for the purpose of answering the questions outlined in chapter one. This questions, along with a short critical assessment, will now be treated in our final chapter.

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[458] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 103-104.

[459] Metz, The Emergent Church, 45, 64.

[460] Metz, Followers of Christ, 56.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS

Now that we have obtained an overall picture of the teachings of Metz and Baum on liberation from oppression it is time to make some final observations and concluding remarks on each theology. We can now refer back to the first chapter and the hypotheses put forth for testing.

In the first place, the actual content of each theology was to be compared and contrasted for the purpose of exposing essential similarities and differences. The first hypothesis was set out in such a way as to determine whether a fundamental consensus exists between the teachings of Metz and Baum on the central theme of liberation from oppression.

In the second place, this thesis was designed to test a hypothesis concerning theological method. This hypothesis was presented within the framework of the three-level theological model used as a hermeneutical tool for interpreting the writings of each theologian. It was formulated as a question concerning the relationship between all three of these levels: the analysis of oppression, the theological formulation of a liberation process, and the application of theology to political and pastoral strategy. The special interest was with the relationship between contextual analysis and practical application, or in more concrete terms, the "analysis" of oppression and the consequent "application" of a theological process of liberation to political and pastoral strategy. These two hypotheses will now be considered in the order of their importance.

First Hypothesis

It is obvious that a definite consensus exists between Metz and Baum in their fundamental beliefs and teachings on liberation from oppression. In our presentation of the major similarities between Metz and Baum in chapter four we can see a common core of shared teaching in their respective understandings of liberation from oppression. Each recognizes that oppression and liberation involve both the personal and social dimensions of life and are fostered by social consciousness and institutions. A liberation process, therefore, must address the various dialectical and dialogical interchanges that occur between the personal and social dimensions of human life. This dialectical approach not only reveals the complicated nature of oppression, it also highlights how liberation always involves a historical process incorporating all the important aspects of human life. Although Baum concentrates a good deal more than Metz on the dialectics of a liberation process, this same basic perspective provides the foundation for each theologian's methodological approach.

This emphasis on the dialogical character of oppression and liberation reveals how liberation must take place in the context of community: people are in need of people in order to experience liberation. Metz and Baum have both stressed that grace is mediated primarily through others in the day-to-day relationships that occur among human beings. Baum prefers to speak of "groups" and "movements" rather than community, but the basic dynamics of divine grace and human liberation are the same as those of Metz's.

Another fundamental point of agreement concerns each theologian's analysis of oppression. They have identified essentially the same situations of oppression and have drawn attention to basically the same situations and/or trends of oppression fostered in the economic system of capitalism. The oppressive effects that capitalism has on both the inner

and outer nature of humanity is central in each theologian's analysis of oppression.

Metz and Baum also agree that the only really authentic sign for a historical process of liberation is solidarity with the actual victims of oppression. The essential meaning of this teaching is that Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus in his special concern for the needs and struggles of the poor and oppressed and for those who suffer unjustly at the hands of others. This is the most basic characteristic of each author's understanding of a legitimate liberation process.

There are many other similarities that could be mentioned to add weight to the case that a fundamental consensus exists between Metz and Baum, but enough instances have been shown to establish that a consensus does indeed exist. Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus by siding with the poor and oppressed in an ongoing community-based process of liberation.

This consensus establishes a number of important teachings that suggest a definite orientation or direction for authentic Christian praxis. Since a commitment to the struggles of the poor and oppressed is not merely a peripheral, but rather a "constitutive" dimension of Christianity, it is no longer possible for Christians to ignore this recent, but incredibly important fundamental teaching. In the past the understanding of "vocation" was interpreted from within the framework of a certain "division of labor" mentality, according to when a preference for work and involvement with the poor was viewed as a "special" vocation (usually that of certain religious orders). This view is no longer capable of being theologically defended. A concrete indentification with the poor is now considered to be an integral dimension of Christian praxis. The practical implications of this teaching are both radical and far-ranging.

Because the poor and oppressed exist as members of society, belonging to social classes, marginalized groups and ethnic or other social minorities, etc., it is necessary for Christians to identify with society's victims in a concrete movement of outreach and active social involvement. All tendencies towards partial or complete non-involvement with the poor and their struggles for liberation must be critized as distortions of Christianity. It is impossible to speak of a process of identification with the poor and oppressed without specific reference to actual association, dialogue, and fellowship with the poor, as well as to social action which seeks justice on their behalf. Commitments to the poor that do not extend beyond financial donations, although important as signs of (possible) goodwill, are insufficient for Christian praxis.

Another important consideration arises from the agreement between Metz and Baum on the essentially "communitarian" dimensions of grace, conversion, Christology, eschatology and ecclesiology. This emphasis seems important for the present time. Why? Because we live in a very "individualistic" society, based on an economic system that demands fierce competition between its members. Given this context, an authentic Christian praxis must fight against a privatized understanding of conversion to Jesus. It is only through ongoing meaningful relationships that the oppressive and alienating experiences of loneliness, frustration, boredom, egoism, unhappiness and fear can be replaced with a liberating lifestyle that fosters sharing, peace, meaningful activity, caring, joy and love. The familiar expression, "God works through others," may sound somewhat trivial, but the profound meaning of this simple truth can never be fully exhausted!

Second Hypothesis

What conclusion can we draw with respect to the second hypothesis concerning the relationship between the analysis of oppression, the theolcgical formulation of a liberation process, and the application of theology to practical strategy? There is a definite correlation between each of these levels within the overall theology of each theologian, but it is impossible to determine whether the source of differences between Metz and Baum can be attributed solely to differences in their analysis. Although an analysis of oppression logically precedes both the formulation and consequent application of theology, it is impossible to ascertain whether the findings from analysis influence or determine the formulation and subsequent application of theology, or whether theological beliefs and/or personal bias influence or determine the character of analysis. This conclusion can be substantiated through an appeal to the fundamental divergencies of focus and emphasis discussed earlier in chapter four: the basic difference in emphasis in the dialectic between the personal and social dimensions of oppression and liberation, and the different degree of focus each theologian places on either the Church or world within their overall theology. A few examples of these correlated relationships between the three levels outlined above will help to illustrate this claim.

There is an obvious correlation between the focus on personal consciousness in Metz's analysis of oppression and his emphasis on personal conversion and change in both his liberation theology and his practical strategies for a historically-situated liberation process. On all three levels their is an emphasis on the "personal." There is also a definite correlation between his analysis of "bourgeois" religion, his elaboration of a pratical fundamental theology for Christianity (his theclogical answer to bourgeois religion), and his elaboration of

practical strategies for liberation within the context of the institutional church. Again, on all three levels there is an obvious focus on "Church".

In a similar manner, there is a definite emphasis on social consciousness in Baum's analysis of oppression, an emphasis on liberation from false consciousness in his theological formulation of a liberation process, and an emphasis on social change in his practical strategies for liberation. On all three levels he is articulating a theology for a liberation process within the wider context of "society."

Locating the source of these different degrees of focus and emphases is not really of great importance. What is important is to recognize the relationship that exists between each of these levels of the theological task when the aim is to elaborate a practical liberation theology. Although the method employed in an analysis of oppression is not a "theological" method per se, but involves the use of "non-theological" diciplines such as philosophy, sociology, political science, etc., our research has shown is that the limits which are established on any one of these three levels also become the limits of the remaining two levels. This connection between levels indicates how a critique of theology must encompass a critical assessment of the use (or "non-use") of other disciplines. Baum's discoveries from social analysis reveal obvious deficencies in Metz's analysis. On the other hand, Metz's critique of "bourgeois" religion reveals areas of weakness in Baum's analysis. On the levels of theological formulation and practical application, Baum speaks primarily of "outreach" whereas Metz is more concerned with the formation of Christian identity and the building of community. Despite these emphases, according to Metz and Baum, both these dimensions are absolutely essential to a process of liberation.

This research clearly shows that differences between Metz's and Baum's understanding of liberation are not "fundamental" differences, but rather, differences in focus, interest, bias, and direction. It is the present author's belief that a carefully worked out synthesis between these two theologies has the potential to provide a practical, yet orthodox theological rationale for Christian praxis within first world countries such as Canada and Germany. The essential guidelines for such a synthesis will be briefly discussed in the following section which deals with a critical assessment of each theology.

Critical Assessment

Metz's call for a radical conversion away from the values and lifestyle of bourgeois society is certainly a powerful testimony to what an authentic imitation of Christ would mean for present-day Christians. He has clearly shown that the principles of domination and competition fostered by the economic system of capitalism are totally incompatible with the values and beliefs of Christianity. While the competitive and dominating principles and practices promoted by capitalism produce alienation and individualism, Christianity aims at creating community through sharing with, and caring for others.

By focusing on the lack of true Christian identity and praxis within parish communities, Metz has raised a number of very important and timely questions for contemporary Christians and Church officials. His reflections on how Christians must undergo a radical change of lifestyle if they wish to follow and imitate Christ is a decisively prophetic observation. The need for the formation of new Church structures that would sustain a radical change of lifestyle on an ongoing basis must be an intregral dimension of an authentic liberation process for Christians. Metz's criticism of obligatory celibacy for priests in that it

"systematically prevents, among other things, the formation of future basic community Churches with a Eucharistic center"[461] certainly needs to be taken seriously by Church officials. If, as Metz so admirably argues, the formation of basic communities is the logical consequence of a truly Christian praxis for the present, then the need for such changes in Church rules and regulations becomes a central concern. Without such changes in rules there is little chance that Christians will be able to find the means to engage in radical changes of lifestyle. His insistence that Religious orders should pioneer the trend towards a radical return to a more authentic imitation and following of Christ is important, but until the Church makes room for "families" (moms, dads, and babies) in radical community ventures akin to religious orders, there is little hope that such attempts at innovation and change will provide anything resembling practical models for Christians. Again, the so-called "evangelical" virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience would seem to be in need of serious theological reworking in order to be accomodated to the needs of all Christians.

Despite the prophetic character of Metz's timely theology, there are a number of problems evident in his analysis. For example, his use of the term "bourgeois" as a designation of social class needs further defining and articulation. The widespread use of this vague term leads to a great deal of confusion regarding his analysis of oppression. He tells us that the middle class citizen is already able to dominate almost everything in the natural world and in human history,[462] but he elsewhere states that the middle class subject, who plans and controls technology and science, is becoming controlled by them.[463] He also describes the disastrous consequences that result when

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[461] Metz, The Emergent Church, 94.

[462] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 29.

[463] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 101.

"technological and economic processes are left to their own nature,"[464] but what does "left to their own nature" mean? especially in light of Metz's belief that "the world comes into being through our freedom."[465] Is the middle-class subject in control or not? And what does it mean to be a middle-class subject? Is a certain financial income and social status required? These are important questions that Metz leaves unanswered.

There is not a clear understanding of the dialectic between social and perscnal consciousness in Metz's analysis. Perhaps the main reason for this weakness can be attributed to the fact that he more or less spurns the use of sociology in his analysis, and therefore, is unable to probe the very area which he originally set out to analyze: the dialectic between the practice of religion and the experience of life within society. It must be pointed out that Metz's appraisal of sociology as a branch of study concerned only with "data about attitude"[466] is simply false. Many sociologists, as Baum points out, are deeply committed to humanitarian and emancipatory goals, and often identify personally with society's victims.

Baum's analysis of oppression seems a good deal more accurate than that of Metz in that he discusses the actual dimensions of oppression within the social context of Canada. By telling us that "it is impossible to speak of sin, conversion and new life without naming the victims of society and analyzing the structures of oppression,"[467] he has indicated how the social sciences are absolutely essential for the theological enterprise. Because he believes that solidarity with the poor and oppressed is the essential sign of religious conversion, then, of course, it

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[464] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 100.

[465] Metz, Theology of the World, 87. Emphasis mine.

[466] Metz, Faith in History and Society, 149.

[467] Baum, "Political Theology in Conflict," 86.

is necessary to discover who the victims of oppression are before such an identification can take place. Since the poor and oppressed exist <u>in society</u>, then identifying with their struggles for justice and peace demands participation in the historical movements for liberation that presently exist in our wider society. There are still areas where Baum's understanding of oppression is in need of further clarification. He tells us, for example, that there is a need to distinguish between class and status in an analysis of Canadian society. He does not, however, show how "status" is related to an analysis of oppression. For example, a middle-class businessman may suddenly lose his job security, and then his job. He may join the ranks of the unemployed and be identified with the "poor" or lower class. Yet his formation, values, and ideas are still very much "middle-class". The agony and sense of failure such a person undergoes may be substantially greater than another person in the same financial bracket who has not experienced the same pressure to continue on the upward ladder of success. We can see how such a businessman is most definitely "oppressed," but because his identity status is middle-class, he is not likely to allow himself to be recognized as "poor and oppressed", and will remain an isolated and depressed person. How can such people, whose numbers seem to be growing in our society, identify with emancipatory groups and movements that consist primarily of people belonging to lower or marginalized status levels? Without including status in an appraisal of those suffering from oppression, there is the risk that such an analysis will be too simplistic. Although Baum's analysis would profit from a more precise focus on the complicated nature of social oppression, his understanding of how social sin and oppressive trends have their primary source in <u>institutions</u> rather than "individuals" seems much more accurate than the position held by Metz.

A careful use of the terms "poor" and "oppressed" would greatly improve the theology of both Metz and Baum. It is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain a clear understanding of how these terms are being employed. For example, Baum obviously sees everyone in Canada, regardless of class or status, as being in some way oppressed. Even an increase in living standard is not a sign of liberation, but usually brings an increase in oppression! Here oppression is defined as "alienation" that has its source in the symbolic and institutional orders of social life. He also points out how people suffering from such oppression are usually not aware of the true motives, interests, or impulses for the way they think and act. If this is true, it is clear that such people cannot be viewed simply as "oppressors," no matter how much their participation in society contributes to oppressive trends. Given this two-fold analysis of oppression as "alienation" and "material poverty," what does "identification with the poor" concretely mean? Does Baum intend it be restricted to the economic or materially poor? or does he also recognize signs of this option in social action and outreach programs to all age groups, ethnic backgrounds, classes, and status levels?

Metz's use of terms such as "solidarity" and "poor" is even more difficult to comprehend. For the most part, they are general maxims. Although he tells us explicitly that identification with the poor must be understood within the context of a concrete historical and social process, this is simply "theory," for nowhere does Metz describe what commitments of solidarity with the poor look like within the context of Germany, nor does he define his use of the term. It is easy to see why Metz is severely criticized for the "abstract" character of his theology, or for misconstruing the praxis/theory dialectic in his theological method. No matter how often he tells us that theology must be elaborated as a theology of the human subject, connected to

the concrete historical and social situation in which subjects are placed, "with their experiences, sufferings, struggles and contradictions," his theology bears no trace of such a context, no voice of the poor and oppressed, and no analysis of their situation.

This problem of a lack of clarity in both Metz and Baum results from the distance that exists between the actual realities they write about, and their descriptions of these realities. The poor and oppressed are easily identified when their stories are heard. This alone is the measure for clarification. The lack of clarity in Metz's and Baum's analysis does not result from a careless oversight in providing the reader with neatly defined terms, but rather, from the absence of the voice of the "poor" and "oppressed" in their writings. These terms represent people, and can only be comprehended when those who are poor and oppressed give voice to their suffering, anger, etc.

Although Metz and Baum both endorse a community-oriented liberation process, neither theologian provides an adequate definition of what constitutes "community". Baum, for example, tells us that the "sociological model for understanding the Christian Church today is the outer-oriented movement."[468] He adds that the Church can no longer be thought of as a society. If the Church is not a "society," in what practical sense is it a community? How does Church as "movement" concretely provide a community context for Christians? Metz provides a theological rationale for "base-communities", but he has not addressed the question of what such communities would look like in terms of actual ecclesial structures and relationships. What are Metz and Baum talking about when they speak of community? How are interpersonal relationships structured? Where, or in what way, are these groups or communities

[468] Baum, New Horizon: Theological Essays. [New York: Herder and Herder, 1974], 140.

situated in society? Neither Metz and Baum address these important questions.

Each theologian presents a fundamentally sound liberation process, but the difficult task of elaborating a theology that takes seriously all the details of a definite community context is not present in either Metz or Baum. For the most part they tell us what to do, how theology should be elaborated, or what the character of praxis and belief should be. Neither are, strictly speaking, liberation theologies.[469]

This criticism is not intended to minimize the value of either theological process of liberation, for this writer believes that a comprehensive and fundamental understanding of a Christian liberation process is needed for today's Church. What is important to recognize, however, is that Baum and Metz are not presenting liberation theology, but rather, a systematic approach to what liberation theologians must consider when articulating the reflections of the group, movement, or community to which they belong. Although there is still much work to be done before an acceptable synthesis can be found for Christian praxis, sooner or later theologians will have to stop formulating theology in terms of principles, and begin proclaiming theology in terms of stories. God knows that those who suffer from sickness, poverty, injustice, violence, etc...are as much in need of spokespersons as they are in need of listeners.

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[469] See The Social Imperative, 37, where Baum gives a generally accepted definition of liberation theologies.

Appendix A

	THEOLOGY OF THE WORLD	EARLY POLITICAL THEOLOGY	LATER POLITICAL THEOLOGY
Stages as defined in this Thesis	STAGE I & II	STAGE III	STAGE IV
Major works in English	1) Poverty of Spirit. 2) Theology of the World. (1-104)	1) Theology of the World. (107-155) 2) "Political Theology" Sacramentum Mundi. 1970.	1) Faith in History and Society. 2) The Emergent Church.
Approx. Period	1960-1968	1966-1974	1974-Present
Emphasis in Theology	Secularization Thesis	Critique of Privatization	Practical Fundamental Theology
Emphasis in Method	Anthropological Hermeneutic	Political Hermeneutic	Primacy of Practice
Historical Analysis	Positive Interpretation of the Modern Age	Positive Interpretation of the Modern History of Freedom	Negative Critique of the Modern History of Freedom

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